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ISKANDER.

A ROMANCE.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

ISKANDER;

OR,

THE HERO OF EPIRUS.

A Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY ARTHUR SPENSER.



" When heroes trod each classic field
Where coward flet now faintly falter;
When ev'ry arm was freedom's shield,
And every heart was freedom's altar."

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.

THE warrior whose achievements form the subject of the succeeding pages is no fabled hero of Grecian mythology, nor fairy knight of Oriental romance. The reader of Turkish history will readily recognise, under the names of Iskanderbeg and Castriot, the chieftain thus described by a masterly pen:—

“With unequal arms Scanderbeg resisted twenty-three years the power

of the Ottoman empire; and two conquerors, Amurath the Second, and his greater son, were repeatedly baffled by a rebel, whom they pursued with seeming contempt and implacable resentment. At the head of sixty thousand horse and forty thousand janizaries, Amurath entered Albania; but the conquests of the sultan were confined to Sfetigrade, and the garrison, invincible to his arms, was oppressed by a paltry artifice and a superstitious scruple. Amurath retired with shame and loss from the walls of Croia, the castle and residence of the Castriots; the march, the siege, the retreat, were harassed by a vexatious and almost

most invisible adversary. In the fulness of conquest, Mahomet the Second still felt at his bosom this domestic thorn ; his lieutenants were permitted to negotiate a truce ; and the Albanian prince may justly be praised as a firm and able champion of his national independence. The enthusiasm of chivalry and religion has ranked him with the names of Alexander and Pyrrhus ; nor would they blush to acknowledge their intrepid countryman."

Such is the animated but authentic outline supplied by the pencil of historic truth. With an unpractised hand, the author has attempted to complete, with the colours of the

B 2 imagination,

imagination, the features of the grand portrait history has sketched. Whether he has succeeded in that attempt remains a point at issue between him and that great tribunal whose bar is the test of merit—the public.

ISKANDER.

CHAPTER I.

“ He doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus.”

THE Ottoman Turks, from a small territory in Asia Minor, had extended their dominions over the greatest part of the Asiatic provinces of the Greek empire; and under the successive reigns of Amurath the First, Bajazet the First, and Mahomet the First, made many successful inroads into Europe; and the latter sovereign having finally fixed his imperial seat at Adrianople, by pushing

his conquests in Romania, the power of the emperors who sat on the throne of Constantine, in the city which he had built to be the mistress of the world, was soon circumscribed to the extent of her suburbs.

Amurath the Second, his son and successor, prosecuted the designs of his father with vigour, and with the greatest celerity subjugated the whole of Macedonia and the northern countries of Greece, and passing Mount Hæmus, planted the victorious standard of the race of Othman upon the banks of the Danube.

Flushed with his successes over the degenerate descendants of the heroes who fought at Thermopylæ and Marathon, at Leuctra and Salamis, Amurath returned to Adrianople, leaving the bashaws Mezitis and Isah to command the forces against Hungary. Already, in imagination,

imagination, he saw Vladislaus at his feet, and the diadems of Hungary and Poland within his grasp—already saw the princes of Christendom courting his alliance, when he was roused from his fallacious dream of ambition, by the intelligence that his generals were defeated in several successive battles by the Hungarians, under the command of Hunades.

This information was followed by accounts from Anatolia, which stated that an insurrection had been fomented by the king of Caramania, and that, in conjunction with Zunites, the prince of Smyrna, he assisted the insurgents with troops and money.

Transported with rage at this defection in a quarter where he thought all secure, he dispatched Iaxis to the succour of Hamanzah, the viceroy of Anatolia, whom Muhameth, the Caramanian

king, had besieged in Attalia; he next caused a large levy to be made, to repulse the more formidable invasion of the prince of Smyrna.

To meet the emergency of the moment, he formed a new troop of janizaries, the command of which was entrusted to George Castriot, or, as he is called by the Turks, Iskanderbeg, of whose personal courage and mental ability, far exceeding the promise of his years, the sultan had received the most favourable accounts from the preceptor to whose care his education was confided.

When Amurath, by treachery or force, had subjugated the whole of Greece, Thrace, and Macedonia, the small kingdom of Epirus was governed by John Castriot, who, seeing the fate of the princes, his neighbours, in order to avert the storm from himself, which he could not oppose, became tributary to

to the sultan, and delivered his four sons as hostages, whom Amurath engaged to educate in his seraglio, with the care and attention due to their rank.

Shortly after this treaty, the prince of Epirus paid the debt of nature; and immediately on his demise, Amurath, regardless of his engagements, occupied the dominions of Epirus and Albania, and garrisoned the fortresses with Turkish troops.

When the news of these occurrences reached the young princes, the three eldest, who were fast approaching to maturity, boldly taxed Amurath with his perfidy, and demanded their patrimony.

Dissembling his rage, the wary tyrant informed them that what he had done was solely with a view to their advantage, and that he was supplying the place of their lamented father, in pro-

tecting their birthright from the rapacious Venetians, their neighbours, who were only waiting for an occasion to add Epirus to their seigniory.

He dismissed them by saying that he would make immediate preparations for their departure in a manner worthy of their princely rank, and their alliance with the sovereign of the Turks.

Deceived by these assurances, the unsuspecting youths returned to their apartments, from which they were destined never more to depart; for their attendant, by the command of the sultan, infused a deadly poison into viands which they all partook of, and, retiring to their respective couches, they slept to wake no more.

Thus fell the hope of the patriots of Epirus and Albania, as the only surviving branch of the royal house was yet a child;

child; and being educated by Amurath in all the minutiae of the Mahometan creed, they had little prospect that he would ever emancipate himself from the chains of fanaticism and the fascinations of the Turkish court. At this time he was quite unconscious of the loss of his father and brothers; and the policy of Amurath forbade the least mention of these relatives in his hearing.

Struck with the symmetry and beauty of his person, Amurath gave a strict charge to the iman to whom his education was entrusted, to provide him proper masters, as his years increased, in the various manly exercises, while his own attention was to be directed to the storing his mind with the learning of ancient and modern sages, and the strict principles which Mahomet had enjoined his followers to practise and promulgate.

Alhammad received his pupil with
B 6 pleasure;

laws of nature; how the high-towering mountains poured forth their thousand springs, to fertilize the valleys at their base — how those springs, becoming rivers, hasten to pay their tribute to the ocean, which returns its waters to the land by exhalations and secret channels.

At another time, the azure fields of heaven, sparkling with unnumbered gems of light, would furnish him with an ample theme for instruction; contemplating the firmament, his soul would rise from the earth, and mix with the celestial objects he described.—“Behold,” said he, “my son, how the glorious Hesper outshines his companions in splendour—how he seems enthroned among ten thousand other luminaries! But even his splendour must bow before the beams of Diana, whose orb, rising over the sombre tops of yon mountain, moves a queen, arrayed in the panoply of starry glory.”

By

By such discourses, to which Iskander would listen with mute attention, would he endeavour to enrich the mind of his pupil; and having conducted him through the ample volume of nature, as he approached to manhood he directed his studies more particularly to his own species, and laid before him the history of nations, from remote antiquity to the reign of Amurath the Fortunate.

Iskander traced with delight the progress of conquerors, and rise and fall of empires—the fame of Cyrus, of Alexander, of Hannibal, of Cæsar, and of Charlemagne, filled him with emulation; but the achievements of Leonidas, of Miltiades, of Epaminondas, and of Phocion, of Scipio, of Camillus, and of Cato, excited the warmest enthusiasm in his breast.

CHAP

CHAPTER II.

"I do not think a braver gentleman,
More active valiant, or more valiant young,
More daring, or more bold, is now alive,
To grace this later age with noble deeds."

WHILE he thus pursued his studies under the venerable Alhammud, manly exercises were not forgotten. The use of the bow, the javelin, and the cimeter, were successively entered upon, and successfully acquired. In equestrian exercises his skill and courage were alike conspicuous, and he emulated the rider of Bucephalus in breaking the most restive and spirited horses. Sometimes, with a troop of young associates, he would chase
the

the savage beasts of the forest, penetrate the wildest recesses, and stem the most rapid currents, in pursuit of the fleet stagelope or ferocious boar.

When eighteen summers had burnished his cheek with the glow of manhood, he was called from the exercises and studies of youth to the active duties of a military life, for which his ardent spirit had long sighed. The Turkish kingdom, which for a few years had enjoyed comparative peace (except when disturbed by inroads from some of its neighbours, or when the sultan detached small foraging parties into their territories), was now alarmed in Asia by the invasion of Muhampeth, the king of Carrmania, on one side, and the hostilities of the prince of Smyrna, Zimites, on another. In Europe also, where his power was more vulnerable, Amurath found himself attacked by the united forces of Hungary and Poland; and in order

order to secure his newly-acquired dominions on the western shore of the Bosphorus, the Turkish sultan was obliged to forego the desire he had of chastising the Asiatic invaders in person.

Hamanzah, the bashaw of Anatolia, was succoured by the large body of forces despatched for that purpose by Amurath, who threw themselves into the city under the cover of the night, by which timely reinforcement he was enabled to defend it against the determined and fierce attacks of the besiegers.

Six months had passed in repeated assaults, which were made and repulsed with the greatest bravery, when, as Muhameth was one day riding round the walls to view the part best suited for a final assault, he was marked by a janizary, who directed one of the hurling machines; and took so sure an aim, that the unfortunate king was struck off his charger.

charger, and carried to his pavilion a lifeless corpse. Ibrahim, his son, dispirited by the death of his father, and fearful of a competitor in the kingdom, raised the siege, and returned with all possible dispatch to Caramania, to secure the inheritance of his fathers.

The whole corps of janizaries commanded by Iskander were originally composed of Christian captives in the reign of Amurath the First; and the succeeding emperors were so thoroughly convinced of the importance of their services, that they directed their attention to their increase and improvement. By the patronage of the sultan, this body of troops arrived to that strength and power as made them dreaded as much by their monarchs themselves as by their enemies in the field.

The levying the forces was carried on and completed with the greatest celerity, and

and Laxis appointed to the command, under the viceroy of Anatolia. Having passed the Propontis, they were joined by the Asiatic reinforcements, among which the janizaries were eminently conspicuous, by their superior equipments and personal appearance. When the two armies had joined, and Hamanzah the viceroy had assumed the command, they quickly passed through Mysia, and advanced with rapidity to the frontiers of Smyrna.

The repeated skirmishes in which the contending forces were engaged displayed the skill and bravery of Iskander. In all the foraging parties he was anxious to share the fatigues, and discharge the duties of the meanest soldier; and as this predatory warfare was carried on for a length of time before the armies came to a general engagement, by his unwearied application to all the various minutiae, he gained, in a few months, more

more experience and knowledge of war than a less attentive observer would have done in the same number of years.

His character, which at this period became formed into decision, was bold and daring, even to presumption; candid, yet with sufficient art to form a politician—prompt to reward or to revenge, a suspicious disposition was his greatest foible. This temper, which perhaps might have been overcome in childhood, was increased in Iskander by the perfidious conduct of the officers to whom the government of the province was committed, who, intent on filling their own coffers, cared little for the prosperity of their master's dominions, or the dispensation of justice to his oppressed subjects.

One of the foraging parties, which was headed by the brother of Jaxis, hurried by the hope of booty, had penetrated a considerable

last compelled to retreat into the fortress.

Hassan having driven the fugitive Turks to their entrenchments, and returning triumphantly to share in the victory over the rest of the army, which he supposed his father had completed, was overpowered by the force of numbers, and taken prisoner.

After the battle Hamanzah blockaded the fortress; and having cut off all external supply, the enemy was at length reduced to extremity, and compelled to yield the castle, compacting, at the same time, with the viceroy, for the safety of himself and his son, which Hamanzah solemnly ratified by oath.

This capitulation greatly displeased Laxis, who, burning with desire of revenge for his brother's death, as well as for his own defeat, would be satisfied with

with nothing but the blood of Zunites and his son ; and having seized an opportunity when Hamanzah was absent in another part of the camp, he entered the tent where the unfortunate chiefs were confined, and having dragged the fettered prince to the feet of his father, stabbed him before his face ; and when the wretched prince upbraided him for his cruelty to a defenceless man, he with a blow of his cimeter struck him to the earth.

Iskander, who witnessed this outrage, exclaimed loudly against the insult offered to the baskaw, after he had guaranteed the safety of the princes. He boldly told Iaxis, that his conduct was unworthy both of a man and a soldier.

Exasperated to madness to be arraigned by a youth, the fierce Iaxis replied—
“ Boy, thine insignificance protects thee.”

from my fury!—no man durst provoke the vengeance of Iaxis."

"The prince whom you slew in fetters, and fled from in arms," said Iskander, "proves the vain-glory and fallacy of that assertion; and be assured the general shall be informed of the dastard who has brought this foul stigma on his name."

So saying he left the tent, and repairing to Hamanzah, informed him of the villainy of Iaxis. That general, though fierce and cruel, was a strict observer of his pledged faith, and summoning Iaxis into his presence, reproached his conduct in the severest terms, and ordered him to resign his command to Iskander, whose gallant intrepidity well merited this promotion.

Iaxis replied, that he had received his commission from the sultan, and to Amurath alone would he resign it.

The

The rising wrath of the viceroy was appeased by Iskander, who said he would willingly forego the honour he had so graciously designed for him, as he did not wish to be rewarded for an act which he considered was his duty to his general.

"Then be it so," said the viceroy; "and since thou refusest to resign thy command to any one except the emperor, the emperor shall be made acquainted with thy perfidy."

Iaxis retired from the presence of the viceroy, vowing the most deadly rancour and inveterate hatred against the viceroy and Iskander.

The death of the unfortunate princes was soon followed by the submission of the whole country of Smyrna to the Ottoman power; and having garrisoned the fortified towns with Turkish troops,

Hamanzah returned to Prusa, from whence he dispatched a courier to Adrianople with an account of his successes over the prince of Smyrna, and the accession of the country to the dominions of Amurath.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

————— “ But eloquence
Beneath her beauty fails, which seem'd
By nature lavish'd on her, that mankind
Might see the virtue of a hero tried
Almost beyond the stretch of human strength.”

AMONG the prisoners which were taken, and enslaved by the conquerors, was a female who was found in the palace of Zunites, where she had attended on the princess his wife. In the confusion and havoc which attended the sacking of the city, Iskander perceived a soldier brutally dragging the unfortunate Zemyra from a mosque, where she had fled for security. He commanded the man to

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desist,

desist, and delivering the fair prisoner to an attendant to conduct her to his tent, requested her to calm her fears, assuring her she should remain there in perfect safety.

The joy which Zemyra felt at her deliverance from the soldier's brutality was but momentary, when she reflected that she escaped death to encounter a worse evil; her feelings overcame her, and she gave utterance, in a flood of tears, to the emotions which swelled her distracted breast.

Iskander, who had returned from the city to the camp, at the close of day entered the inner part of the tent, where Zemyra was sitting in tears, musing on the vicissitudes of her fortune, and respectfully approached her, saying—"Lady, although the chance of war has thrown you into my power, yet, be assured that the utmost deference shall be paid

paid to your wishes, and your situation shall be as agreeable as a camp can afford."

"Alas!" said Zemyra, "a wretch who has been the sport of fortune lies at your mercy! Pity my misery! and, oh! triumph not over a defenceless female!"

Fearing the worst disgrace a virtuous woman can experience, Zemyra threw herself on her knees before Iskander. Her long raven tresses fell in dishevelled wildness over her shoulders—her face, which Iskander had before but imperfectly seen, was now displayed to his enraptured gaze in all the powerful eloquence of sorrowing beauty—her eyes, black and piercing, now encountered his, and the tears which bedewed her cheeks increased rather than diminished the power of her charms.

The contour of her face united femi-

nine delicacy with a commanding majesty; the transparent whiteness of her skin was heightened by the glossy blackness of her raven hair; and her form displayed the most regular proportion of human beauty.

Since he had emerged from the seclusion of the suburbs of Prusa, to assume the active duties of a military occupation, he had beheld numerous beauties of all nations. The Circassian and Georgian nymphs, with all their attractions, were passed unnoticed by him; but when the beams of Zemyra's eyes darted their piercing lustre, although clouded by tears, and the roses of her cheeks were blanched by sorrow, his heart acknowledged the power of her charms, and his face mantling with the blushes of confusion, he exclaimed—"Rise, bright vision! wound not my soul by this humiliating posture." Then falling at her feet, he continued—"Rather thus let me

me bend before the fairest of nature's works, if thou really art of mortal mould, though most resembling the houris of paradise: here let me obtain the privilege of being permitted to live thy willing slave."

Zemyra trembled with apprehension, well knowing the despotic sway which the Turkish chieftains exercised over those ill-starred females that fell into their power. The hasty avowal of admiration which Iskander so passionately made, she dreaded more than the fiercest expression of anger, and with words almost rendered inarticulate by the excess of her emotions, she cried—"Leave me, oh, leave me!—if there is a spark of truth in your protestations, prove it by immediately complying with my request."

Iskander, already ashamed of his hasty expressions and unguarded submission to the power of beauty, willingly withdrew, feeling for the first time, the con-

flict which love and reason excited in his breast.

When he retired to the solitude of his own tent, he asked himself if his conduct towards Zemyra had been marked with that propriety which ought to characterize the pupil of the sage Alham-mah?

"In your progress through life, my son," the sage would often say to Iskander, "let your love and friendship never be founded alone on a fair exterior. Vice frequently lurks under the smiles of beauty, and the dignity of virtue, which often shines on a manly countenance, is assumed only as a mask to disguise the blackest villainy and deepest guilt. The speckled beauty of the panther may command our admiration, but his ferocious nature is our dread; while the rough skin and inelegant form of the camel, though it presents no attractions to the eye,

eye, is productive of the greatest utility to man, and constantly contributes to his comforts. Let your friendship and love be not hastily formed: the fire that blazes highest is not the most durable, but the esteem which has the mind for its basis defies the lapse of years, and time, instead of shaking, strengthens the structure."

" Fool that I am!" said Iskander, mentally: "almost on the threshold of life, have I not forgotten the precepts of years? Have I not bent before the power of external beauty, without contemplating the virtue of the soul? And, what is still worse, have I not basely taken advantage of the defenceless situation of a woman whom I ought to have protected, by a premature and passionate declaration of love, before I knew to whom that avowal was made? Oli, Alhammah! how wouldst thou pity the weakness of thy pupil, on whom

c 6 thou

thou hast lavished the purest precepts, whose virtue has proved unequal to its first trial!"

During a sleepless night, Iskander wisely considered that it was much more laudable to repair a fault than to waste his time in unavailing complaints; and he deemed the best mode of doing so would be to offer Zemyra her liberty, and a safe conduct to any place she might appoint.

With the earliest dawn of the morning a message from the viceroy came to order his attendance at the divan in the state pavilion. Iskander followed the messenger, and found the divan, consisting of all the principal chieftains, already assembled. The bashaw, addressing the council, informed them that he had completed the measures necessary for the security of the newly-acquired kingdom, and should, within a few hours, commence

mence his march back to Prusa; he therefore commanded them to prepare for their departure from Smyrna without delay.

This intelligence was received with joy by the chiefs, who having plundered and destroyed all that fell in their way, had few attractions in a despoiled country, which afforded them no hope of further booty. Iskander alone heard the command with sorrow, as it entirely precluded all possibility of putting into execution the design he had formed of conducting Zemyra to the place of her choice.

He retired from the divan, reflecting on the difficulty which had started up to oppose his wishes, and after revolving what course to pursue, he retired to his tent, with the determination of informing Zemyra of his new embarrassments.

When

When the departure of Iskander on the preceding night had left Zemyra to seek repose, the past transaction drove sleep from her couch, although the endeavour of her generous captor had been exercised to procure her a female attendant, and every accommodation a camp could supply. She reflected on the events which had thrown her into her present situation; instead of beholding in the arbiter of her fate, as she justly might have dreaded, a cruel and despotic tyrant, in whose countenance all the fiercest passions were depicted, she saw a youth advancing into the bloom of manhood, his ingenuous face glowing with health, and a form which, though full of nerve and vigour, was such as might serve to the statuary as a model of manly symmetry.

It may be supposed that a youthful female could not behold such an object with indifference, especially as she could
not

not but consider him, as her preserver; and since she had been in his power, he had treated her with respectful deference, except in the violent expression of love, and this she was inclined to extenuate, at the suggestions of a lurking spark of vanity. Yet ought she to value such a declaration from one who had known her so short a period? Like Iskander, she had been taught to subject her passions to the dominion of reason, and like him, she resolved to expel the intruder, love, from her breast, before he gained too firm a footing to be ever eradicated.

Iskander returning from the divan, found Zemyra in a greater state of tranquillity than he hoped; and hesitatingly addressing her, he said—"Pardon, lady, the extravagance into which the sudden appearance of so much beauty hurried me. I now come to express my regret that I can offer no better atonement than protestations of my contrition. I had purposed

purposed to have asked your directions as to your destination; but I fear you must still remain, in appearance, my prisoner, as Hamanzah has issued orders for our immediate march."

"That," replied Zemyra, all her suspicions returning, "is a subterfuge unworthy a warrior. Why deceive me with vain hopes, which you never intended to realize? The only means by which you can prove the sincerity of your repentance is to permit my instant departure."

"I would readily do so," said Iskander, "were it not exposing you to new dangers. In the present unsettled state of the country, you would have equally as much to dread from the people of Smyrna as from the Turkish soldiery; and while you are my prisoner, you are secure in my protection, would you suffer yourself to think so.—We march to Prusa," continued he, perceiving Zemyra to hesitate, "and then I shall be at full liberty to obey

obey your wishes. I have ordered a litter to be prepared for your reception, as you would find it both fatiguing and unpleasant to perform the journey in any other manner."

Zemyra felt the delicacy of the arrangement; and in acceding to it, was almost persuaded that the promises of Iskander were sincere. This persuasion was cherished by the respectful softness of his demeanour, and the lively interest which he appeared to take in her happiness.

The march to Prusa was performed with celerity; and during its continuance, Iskander, as far as his duty would allow, was constantly near the litter, although he would not permit himself to enter into conversation with Zemyra, further than to inquire, from time to time, if any thing could be added to her accommodation.—“Alas!” said he,
“she

"she regards me with hatred. How little is she acquainted with my heart! But why should I expect otherwise? Does she not consider me as her country's enemy?—perhaps the murderer of some dear friend, and the enslaver of herself? If through all this she could see aught estimable in me, she must be endowed with more than mortal perception, as she is possessed of more than mortal charms."

Absorbed in these reflections, he perceived not that the army had entered the suburbs of Prusa, until he was aroused from his reverie by the salaams and acclamations of the populace, who thronged the streets and the tops of the houses, to behold the triumphant entry of their viceroy.

When the troops had dispersed to their quarters, Iskander conducted Zemysra to an apartment in the palace; and wishing

wishing her a good repose, promised to visit her at the dawn of day, to receive her commands respecting her future destination.

Iskander, fatigued with the length of the march, slept long after the sun had illuminated the minarets of Prusa. Ashamed of this neglect of Zemyra's concerns, he hastily performed his morning ablutions, and hurried to her apartment; where he found her anxiously waiting his coming.—“Now, lady,” said he, “you have but to express your wishes, and they shall be obeyed to the utmost extent of my power.”

“Your kindness,” replied she, “shall ever live in this grateful breast; and when my daily thanks ascend to the Giver of all good, the name of Iskander shall be always remembered in my orisons. The generous and noble treatment which I have experienced from you,” she continued, “deserves my fullest confidence.

You

You see in me the unfortunate daughter of an unfortunate prince, Ducearis, who traced his descent to the imperial house of the Palæologi, and governed a happy people with moderation and equity; but when the Turkish sultan, Amurath, like an impetuous flood, overwhelmed the Grecian states in one tremendous ruin, Attica shared the same fate; and my father, and two brave brothers, disdaining to survive the fall of their country, expired, covered with wounds, in the gate of Athens; and that city, the nurse of arms and the cradle of the arts, beheld the Turkish crescent proudly shine on the highest turret of the Acropolis.

“ Death, and the most detestable slavery, was the lot of the unhappy daughters of Athens; the noblest were promiscuously mingled with their former menials by their undiscriminating masters. It was my destiny to be purchased by an Armenian slave-dealer, and thus escaped the vengeance of Mahomet, the fierce

fierce son of Assurath, who had sworn to exterminate every branch of our race. I was transported to Smyrna by my pur-chaser, where I had no sooner arrived, than I was bought by Zunites, and presented to his queen. I concealed my former rank, to avoid the taunts of my fellow-slaves, and was treated with kindness by the princess. I had become somewhat reconciled to my hard fate, when the conquering arms of your sultan again disturbed my short-lived tranquillity. Smyrna acknowledged your power—her prince became your victim, and the ill-starred Zemyra became again exposed to the severest shafts of calamity."

"Would the sweet care were ever mine to shield you from its darts!" eagerly exclaimed Iskander.

"Your kindness is unexampled," replied the grateful Zemyra; "but I will intrude no further on it than to beg to be conveyed to a seaport, from whence I can

now blowing from the prosperous quarter.

The kindness of the princess of Smyrna had furnished Zemyra with ample means for the expences of the voyage; and there being several females, the wives and daughters of the merchants, on board, she felt herself more at ease than she had been since the fatal day, which separated her from all she held dear.

Sometimes, indeed, the graceful and manly form of her deliverer, which she constantly beheld in her mind's eye, would cause a sigh to rise. His courageous demeanour, so unlike the barbarous ferocity which characterized the Turkish nation, excited her astonishment and warmest admiration; but she checked the thoughts which would wander on his high perfections, and only permitted

permitted herself to muse on the generous kindness he had displayed towards her.

But here the breast of Zemyra was more vulnerable than at any other point; and the less she dwelt on the graces of his person, the more her heart was filled with love, which she fondly entertained under the fair semblance of gratitude.

The quays, on which a multitude of traders busily prosecuted their affairs, and the port, crowded with the sails of various nations, attracted not the attention of Iskander, who lingered on the beach till the form of Zemyra was no longer discernible on the deck; he then pressed spurs to his fleet courser, and as if to leave recollection behind, urged him to his full speed, till he reached the gates of Prusa.

Zemyra's image was the companion
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of his journey; and the interest her beauty and misfortunes had at first excited was now augmented by the knowledge of her sad history. He entered his apartment, with his heart sinking at the thought of the distance which now separated him from the object of his dearest wishes.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

" Imperial spoiler !
 Give me my father—give me back my kindred !
 Give me the fathers of ten thousand orphans !
 Give me the sons in whom thy ruthless sword
 Hath left our widows childless ! "

THE courier which Hamanzah had dispatched to Adrianople returned to the metropolis of Anatolia, with the sultan's firman to appoint Iaxis, whose fierceness was congenial to the sultan's disposition, to the government of the province, and to command the viceroy to repair immediately to court.

Knowing the order of Amurath re-
D 2 quired

quired prompt obedience, Hamanzah set forward, with two-thirds of the army, comprising the body of janizaries which Iskander commanded; and having crossed the Propontis by forced marches, reached Adrianople before even the impatient sultan could expect their arrival.

Hamanzah hastened to prostrate himself at the feet of his sovereign, who received him with a frowning brow, and demanded of him if the youth Iskander had accompanied him?

“Pillar of nations!” replied Hamanzah, “he waits your command, to kiss the dust of your feet.”

“Bid him approach,” said the sultan.

A mute obeyed the mandate, and Hamanzah recounted his gallant behaviour in the Smyrnan expedition.

“It is well,” said Amurath, his anger somewhat

somewhat dispelling; “we shall employ him in a warfare which, did he know all, he would not so well approve of, or I am much deceived in him.”

These words were heard by Iskander as he entered the divan, and excited the strongest curiosity in his breast. Prostrating himself before the throne of the sultan, he was by him commended for his conduct in the late war, and encouraged to future acts of bravery by the promise of riches and honour.

Iskander acknowledged the monarch’s condescension in suitable terms, and retired to a distant seat, while Amurath proceeded — “The Hungarians, conducted by the audacious Huniades, have invaded Bulgaria, and require a powerful force to stop their audacity. I propose to chastise them in person: we shall then see whether this Walachian

peasant will dare measure his puny strength with the colossal power of the delegate of Mahomet."

" Sovereign of Asia, and scourge of Europe!" replied the vizier Mirvan, "the slave is beneath thy resentment. Let the chosen troops be dispatched to bring the head of Huniades, and stain not thy resplendent glories by a conquest unworthy thy name."

This adulatory speech was echoed from every side of the divan; and Amorath, assenting to the proposal of his vizier, appointed Karem-bey, his brother-in-law, general of the intended army, which he ordered to be ready for their march after the conclusion of the feast of Bairam, which was to commence on the morrow.

The sultan then retired, which was the signal for the dispersion of the assembly,

sembly, and withdrew to prepare for the celebration of this most solemn ritual of the Mosleum religion.

Amurath, whom Iskander had not seen since he was too young to have any recollection of him, possessed features which gave the beholder the assurance of a soul capable of forming the most extensive projects: his ambition was unbounded; what he could not effect by force, he was equally ready to compass by policy. His faith was inviolable, until he had a fair pretext for the breach of it. This he would never fail to create, when he saw it was advantageous to do so; and by causing the aggression to spring from the enemy, throw all the odium of the breach of treaty on them.

With a steady eye to the aggrandizement of his house and the extension of his kingdom, he never suffered a prodigal effusion of blood, and punished with

exemplary severity any deviation in his soldiers from his orders: by this means he acquired many important conquests with small loss. From studying mankind as a statesman, he learnt the master-spring that actuated the conduct of individuals; and by threats to some, and well-timed promises to others, he often held his enemies in check till he had leisure or opportunity to chastise them. This policy, which frequently assumed the character of forbearance; only reserved punishment for those obnoxious to him; and thus he concluded a pacific treaty with the king of Caramania, while he reduced the principality of Smyrna to a Turkish province.

Against the Hungarians he hesitated not to declare his enmity, knowing they were to be subdued by direct force alone, and therefore he assented to the vizier's opinion, as he resolved mentally soon to follow Karem-bey with a force worthy of

of the sultan of Turkey, and the fame of the enemy it was destined to overcome.

Filled with tormenting reflections on the words which he had heard from the sultan, and which he readily perceived were not meant to reach his ear, Iskander was returning from the council, through a narrow street, when a dervise crossed his way, and standing before him, so as to preclude his passage, said, in a low tone—"Follow me!"

The strangeness of this address caused him to observe the figure from whom it came. A tall muscular person, over whose head the hand of time had sprinkled a few grey hairs, supported himself on a staff, though apparently little needing such a prop. His countenance seemed furrowed more by care than by age; and when Iskander in astonishment began to follow him, he moved with greater

speed than his decrepit form had promised.

The dervise led the way through the most unfrequented avenues of the city, until he stopped at the narrow portal of a low building of mean appearance, at which he gave three distinct knocks.

"Whither wouldst thou lead me?" said the wondering Iskander; "what is the design of thy mysterious conduct?"

"This is no place for explanation," replied the dervise. "If thou fearest to follow me, return by the way thou camest; but if thou darfst to proceed, glory and happiness lie before thee."

The recollection of Zemyra passed over his memory like the lightning's flash.—"Ah!" thought he, "what happiness is there, separated from thee? But what connexion can my mysterious guide have with Zemyra? At any hazard, however, I will go on.—Lead on!"—he

he exclaimed, firmly grasping his master; "I will follow thee."

They now heard a footstep approach the door on the inside.

"*Allah bismillah!*" said the dervise.

"*Allah bismillah!*" was answered from within.

The low door was then opened by a man habited like Iskander's guide in the garb of a dervise; he carried a small lamp, which shed a feeble light over the gloom of a vaulted passage, through which they proceeded till they arrived at an apartment at the extremity. This they entered, and found there three other dervises, who, rising at their entrance, welcomed the return of Iskander's conductor by a low obeisance, while they directed the most scrutinizing glances at his companion.

The guide motioned Iskander to a mat on the floor, and waving his hand, the attendant dervise who admitted them left the apartment, and returned bringing refreshments. These were placed before Iskander and his silent conductor, who invited him to partake of the coarse but healthful viands.

He complied; and having finished their silent meal, his companion rose, and said—“ Young man, thou wast not brought here to be mocked with vain hopes: thou hast broken bread and eaten salt at my board; before thou learnest further, I require thee to swear, by all thou reverest and holdest most dear, to submit thyself implicitly to my absolute directions for the space of three days, if so long I should require it of thee.”

“ Not to secure my dearest hopes would I pledge myself to the probable perpetration of guilt,” replied Iskander, peremptorily.

“ Hesitate

"Hesitate not then for that cause," rejoined the mysterious dervise; "the instant thy sense of virtue accuses my conduct of evil, that instant thy oath ceases to bind thee."

"On those conditions then," said Iskander—"by all that is dearest to me, and by the great and sacred name of Allah, I swear to obey your commands for that period, in whatever shape they may be delivered!"

In promising this, Iskander considered that as the feast of Bairam was commencing, he could absent himself unnoticed, and return to resume his duties at the expiration of that festival.

The dervise then directed Iskander to assume a habit similar to his own, and leading him to an inner apartment, left him to change the splendid habiliments of an aga of janizaries for the coarse and humble habit of a wandering dervise.

At

At this new mystery he half repented the promise he had made, but impelled by the additional motive of strong curiosity, he resolved to persevere; and concealing his cimeter under the cloak, he joined his strange conductor in the outer apartment, who expressed his approbation at the metamorphosis, which was so complete that those most intimately acquainted would have been unable to recognize him.

His mysterious guide, causing his associates to withdraw, said to Iskander—“ We are alone; the men who have just left us are warmly and deeply engaged in my interests, but there are secrets which are forbidden to them. Who are thy parents?”

“ Alas!” said Iskander, mournfully, “ would that I could answer thy question! Since my childhood I have known no other parent but my venerable instructor, the sage Alhansmah; and when I have

I have asked him respecting the authors of my being, he has forbidden my question with an asperity he was unaccustomed to use on any other occasion, so that rather than give him pain who was always full of kindness to me, I forbore to press him farther on the subject."

" Alhammah had weighty reasons for his silence," replied the dervise; " but I have the means of making the discovery."

" Bless me—oh, bless me with the welcome sound!" exclaimed Iskander, his countenance glowing with hope.

" Calm thy transports," answered the dervise; " as yet I cannot comply with thy wishes. At the expiration of thy voluntary engagement thou shalt know all."

" Then every danger, toil, and difficulty, will be lightened; the snows of Caucasus, nor the sands of Arabia, shall be sufficient barriers to oppose my progress. No task," continued the eager youth,

youth, “ will be too hard for my accomplishment, when a reward so bright beams upon me from the end of my probation. But who art thou to whom I am to be indebted for this happy discovery ?”

“ At present know me as Moneses—the lapse of time will inform you further.”

He then clapped his hands, on which one of the dervises entered, and delivered a silver-hilted ataghan to each, saying to Moneses—“ We are prepared.”

Concealing the weapon in the long sleeve of his vest, Moneses desired Iskan-
der to do the same, and followed the
dervise, who bore the lamp. They pro-
ceeded through a narrow passage, similar
to that they had entered by, for a consi-
derable distance, till their progress was
terminated by a wall, from which, by
touching a concealed spring, a massy
stone

stone was removed, and passing through the opening, they entered a spacious mausoleum.

Moneses, by a counter-spring, replaced the stone, and on leaving the mausoleum, Iskander perceived they were in a cemetery without the walls of the city.

At the gate of the burying-place they found the three dervises waiting their arrival, each mounted on a black courser, and holding another harnessed. Iskander, Moneses, and the attendant dervise, mounted on the unoccupied horses, and the two former taking the lead, they set forward at full speed, through a country totally unknown to Iskander.

The night was dark and starless. Silently they proceeded over hill and dale, and when the dawn dispelled the shades of night, they arrived in a thick and tangled forest, into which having forced
their

their way through many devious windings, they entered an open glade, of the finest verdure, fenced on all sides by the gigantic monarchs of the wood.

There dismounting, Mimeses left the four dervises with the horses, and desiring Iskander to follow him, they struck into the recesses of the forest, in a direction opposite to which they had entered.

The morning rays of the sun tipped the foliage of the embowering trees with gold, when the travellers left the verdant glade; and they pursued their toilsome way through wild intricacies, until the sun shone upon them in the full glory of his meridian lustre, when they emerged from the wood, and found themselves on a wild uncultivated heath, bounded, at a remote distance, by the frowning hills of Mount Haemus.

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The

The munificence of Amurath was displayed throughout the widely-extended and increasing dominions of his empire, in the erection of mosques, caravanserais, bridges, and other public edifices. On the borders of this savage forest, in an uncultivated country, at the foot of the rugged mountain Hemus, a caravansera met the eyes of the gladdened travellers, who, exhausted with their tiresome march through the forest, found the refreshment that was cheerfully set before them, as strangers and dervises, doubly grateful.

The public spirit which prompted the sultan to endow these edifices for the exercise of hospitality was not the only motive he had, nor the only end answered. At each of these caravanserais, besides the host, who was commissioned to administer to the wants of travellers, a small band of soldiers was stationed, more particularly on the frontiers, to examine

examine and detain all passengers who might be, or were suspected to be, imical to the government of the Sublime Porte.

The knowledge of this had caused Moneses to adopt for himself and Iskan-deer the habits of dervises, as well as to leave their horses in the recesses of the forest, as an equestrian religious would doubtless have excited the suspicions of the guard.

They partook heartily of the frugal fare set before them, and having concluded their meal, and bestowed their benedictions on the host, they again pursued their journey; and as the day closed, began to ascend the rugged sides of Mount Hæmus.

After a toilsome ascent for some distance, the mountain-path which they had followed was imperceptibly lost among rocks

rocks and thickets, and Iskander beheld with astonishment the agility and strength of Moneses, as he ascended an almost perpendicular crag, by grasping the shrubs which grew in its interstices.

This hazardous path was rendered more difficult by the pitchy darkness of the night; but Moneses bidding Iskander follow his footsteps, they soon gained a flat ledge of the rock projecting before the mouth of a cave, rendered visible to the travellers by a light gleaming faintly therein.

The talismanic sign of "Allah bismillah!" was again uttered by Moneses, and quickled re-echoed from the cave; on which, bending his body, he entered, and was followed by Iskander, whose astonishment increased at every step, as his guide had been totally silent to all the questions he had put to him throughout

out the journey, relative to its purpose, or to their destination.

At the distance of a few paces from the entrance the cave increased in height and breadth, and the person who had answered to the signal of Moneses appeared, seated on the fragment of a rock, armed with a short but ponderous cimeter. The light was emitted from a fire of dried branches, kindled to counteract the chilling humidity of the place.

The athletic sentinel arose at their entrance, and at the command of Moneses having removed the rock on which he sat, discovered a flight of steps, which his conductor immediately began to descend. No sooner did Iskander follow, grasping his cimeter, than the stone was replaced, and they proceeded, in impenetrable darkness, down several steps, till they emerged into the light of another

other cavern, whose immense extent was rendered visible by the blaze of a large pile of faggots in the centre.

Iskander perceived a great number of men (who from their dress he knew to be Christians, but of what nation he could not discover); stretched on mats, buried in sleep, except one of the band, who walked continually round the fire, which he occasionally replenished from a pile of faggots in a recess of the cave.

On the sides of the cavern appeared an immense quantity of arms of all descriptions—sabres, cutters, and daggers, bows, arrows, pikes, and muskets, met the eye at every glance; the shaded recesses of the rocks were rendered more gloomily dark by the light which was reflected from the burnished arms. The *coup d'œil* appeared like the magazine of Pandamonium; and the sentinel standing amidst the prostrate figures stretched

stretched around the cavern, seemed another Satan viewing his discomfited confederates, or a Vulcan, in the fabled forge of Etna, amidst a troop of wearied Cyclops.

When they emerged from the entrance of the cavern, where they had stood as Iskander viewed the gloomy scene, the sentinel seeing them, struck his pike thrice on a huge brazen cauldron, which stood near the fire. The loud echoes reverberated through the cavities of the lofty rock, and the recumbent band hastily springing from their couches, stood erect, grasping their spears, and crowding round the guard, earnestly demanded the cause of the unexpected summons?

At this moment Iskander and his companion advanced into the centre, when the whole band, which an instant before had filled the caye with their clamorous inquiries,

inquiries, at the beck of Monezes became respectfully silent, while the amazed Iskander beheld his guide bend before him, and heard him exclaim to the wondering troop—"Behold your prince, your deliverer! the son of your revered monarch—the long-lost, long-lamented George Castriot!"

At this welcome sound the whole assembly followed the example of their leader, and bent before the prince, while reiterated shouts of—"Long live our chief, the noble prince of Albania and Epirus!" pealed through the vaulted roof.

When these transports had in some measure subsided, the band, at the command of Monezes, returned to their rugged couches, while Iskander, or (as he will henceforward be styled) Castriot, recovering from the stupifying amazement which had seized him at such an un-

looked-for scene, turning to Moneses, said—" Old man, what mockery is this that thou insultest me with? Was it for this meritorious purpose that I have been mysteriously led through paths almost untrodden by human feet? and have descended into the bowels of the earth, to be made the sport of your midnight revelry? The hoary head of age is venerated when it produces the counsels of wisdom, but, linked with folly, is contemned by all men."

" Pardon me, my prince," replied Moneses; " the scene thou hast witnessed hath nothing of mockery in it. Thou art indeed lord of thy rightful patrimony, and thy faithful subjects of Epirus earnestly expect the day when the clarion of Castriot shall rouse thousands of patriots to avenge and deliver their country."

" But what have I to do with Epirus?" answered the prince; " I owe all to the bounty of the sultan, nor know I of any

any inheritance that I possess, save my trusty cimeter and the favour of Amurath."

"Amurath, my lord," said Moneses, "hath been a niggard benefactor to thee. He gave thee a command in an army of slaves, who at the call of interest would desert or plunder thee, and took from thee the sovereignty of a free people, who would think their last drop of blood nobly shed in defending their prince."

"With what dreadful words dost thou harrow up my soul? Speak, Moneses!" exclaimed the agitated youth, grasping his arm with convulsive strength—"tell me who or what I really am!"

"The tale is irksome," replied Moneses; "but I live to obey you.—Your father reigned peaceably and happily in Epirus, for the basis of his throne rested firmly on the hearts of his subjects. Prosperity diffused her smiles over his dominions, till the lust of power, insatiable as the grave, prompted the Turk-

ish sultan to turn his conquering arms against the principalities of Greece. Thessaly and Macedonia submitted to his power, and either became tributary, or were reduced to the condition of provinces of the Turkish empire. Your father concluded an honourable alliance, and mutual hostages being exchanged, yourself and three noble brothers were sent to Adrianople, Amurath having solemnly pledged himself to treat you with the tenderness and care he would shew to his own offspring.

“ Bred from infancy in your father’s court, I had been always honoured with his confidence, though his junior in years. From my youth I had been a soldier, and Epirus being in a state of profound peace, had served as a volunteer in many of the European nations. On my return to my native land, using the freedom your father permitted, I blamed him for the confidence he had placed in Amurath, in committing his four sons,

the

the hope of his kingdom, to the absolute power of the sultan, who would not hesitate to extend his empire, should opportunity offer, at the expence of the ties of amity and the bonds of the treaty. The event proved the justice of my suspicions. Your father's anxiety, roused by my suggestions, renewed the attacks of a disease he had before laboured under, and in a few months after my return I was called to the melancholy duty of closing the eyes of my friend and sovereign."

"Alas, my father!" exclaimed Castricot; and struggling with his emotions, bade Moneses proceed.

"Amurath," continued Moneses, "at this fatal event threw off the mask of friendship he had assumed, and seized the moment of confusion, when all was alarm and doubt, to pour his troops into the devoted kingdom. To save the country from rapine, resistance being vain without a prince whose name would

have animated the people, a few nobles and myself, who had formed a hasty council, deemed it most prudent to submit to the invader of our liberties, and wait some favourable turn of fortune to assert our independence.

" The cities and fortresses throughout the kingdom were soon garrisoned with Turkish troops, the inhabitants reduced to the most abject slavery, and those men who, by their eminence in rank or virtue, seemed to bear the yoke with repugnance, were snatched from their homes and families, their possessions confiscated, and themselves condemned as traitors to a monarch to whom they owed no allegiance, and whose sovereignty they had never acknowledged. Immured in the horrors of a Turkish dungeon, if they escaped with life, many dragged on a miserable existence, while others experienced a summary termination of their misery from the fatal bow-string.

" By

" By these and similar outrages did Amurath endeavour to stifle the flame of liberty which was yet nourished in the hearts of the Epirots, and vainly sought to conquer the indomitable mind by punishing the body. The fire, though smothered, was not extinguished, and only waited an occasion to blaze out into a conflagration, and consume the oppressor in its flames.

" To quell the hopes the Epirots might entertain of regaining their independence, a report was circulated that the four sons of our sovereign had died of the plague at Prusa. Well knowing the crafty policy of the sultan, I gave no credit to this rumour, and to ascertain the fate of the princes, I assumed the garb of a dervise, and journeyed on foot to Prusa. By the power of gold I there discovered that Amurath caused your unsuspecting brothers to be dispatched by poison, but that you, my prince, were delivered to the care of the sage

E 4 Alhammah,

Alhammah, with a charge from the sultan to give the strictest attention to your education in all the mental and personal accomplishments.

" Who has not heard the fame of Alhammah? The report of his virtue, wisdom, and integrity, was known from the heights of Caucasus to the snows of Armenia, and from the islands of the Egean to the shores of the Caspian. All the good spoke loudly in his praise, and the malignant aspersions of the wicked served only to establish more firmly his unsullied reputation.

" Blest with such a preceptor, I thought it most prudent to preserve the secret, and leave thee to participate in the benefits of the instructions of the sage, rather than by prematurely disclosing your real situation, to embitter your days. I therefore left you in happy infancy, and in my return chance directed me to the cave we first entered, which I found a secure retreat, and from hence, during fifteen

fifteen years, made frequent journeys into Epirus.

" I traversed that wretched land, and found oppression seated on the throne of power. The miserable inhabitants were reduced to the most abject state of slavery—their sons dragged from their native vales, where their fathers had lived in happy rustic content through succeeding generations, to fill the cohorts of the Ottoman army—their daughters torn from the fond parents and adoring lovers, to be immured within the cheerless walls of a Turkish harem, the drooping victims of pampered lust; the nobles proscribed, and their domains confiscated on the slightest pretence, to gratify the avarice of the tyrannical sanjaks.

" In the various journeys which from time to time I made into Epirus, I often encountered some of my distressed and discontented countrymen. To such as I found worthy of my confidence, I en-

trusted the secret of my retreat, and inviting them to accept an asylum with me, my cave became, in a short time, a rendezvous for the exiled Epirots; and as our numbers increased, we found it necessary to enlarge our dwelling. In doing this, we discovered the passage by which we descended, choked with rubbish, and having all the appearance of a long-forgotten entrance, formed perhaps at some distant period by a banditti, who had chosen that secluded spot as well adapted for their lawless depredations. By this passage we discovered the cave you behold; and having such ample room to afford an asylum to our oppressed compatriots, we sought them in their retreats, and here formed a community of the exiles of Epirus. You have heard of the banditti of Mount Hæmus, my lord?"

" I have," replied Castriot. " The exploits of their chieftain are known throughout Turkey, and have created in

in me an earnest desire to see a man whose mysterious conduct is not less famous than his daring bravery."

"Behold him now!" exclaimed Moneses: "the decrepit dervise, the exiled Epirot, and the robber-chief, stand before thee."

"My conjecture was then right—But enough of that," said Castriot, his whole frame trembling with rage: "why have I so long been permitted to remain ignorant of the perfidy of him whom I have looked up to with veneration as my benefactor?"

"To have secured vengeance on the despot," replied Moneses. "Our numbers have been daily increasing; and sometimes, disguised as dervises, we have craved the aid of the benevolent; but oftener, as the banditti of Haemus, have we extorted arms and provisions from the sanjaks of Romania and Bulgaria. By this means a double end is answered—in procuring weapons for

our increasing bands, and in training our patriots to the toils of war. The vigilance of the sanjaks has never discovered our retreat; and as we seldom appear in a collected body, the sultan has never detached a large force against us. Thus have we retaliated the miseries of our country upon the proud palaces of Turkey (always avoiding and sparing the lowly cottage), and formed, unsuspected by Amurath, a body of troops with stout hearts and hands, which shall ere long sap the foundation of his throne in Epirus, and make it totter and fall into ruins."

"Tis a plan nobly contrived!" exclaimed Castriot.

"And shall be as nobly executed," rejoined Moneses. "On your appearance to claim your rightful patrimony, a host of true-hearted Epirots will instantly rush to arms, and pour, like a resistless flood, on their guilty oppressors. By your long residence in Turkey, you, my prince,

prince, have undoubtedly acquired a knowledge of their policy and warfare, so we shall be enabled to foil the sultan at his own weapons, and take a revenge worthy of heroes."

"Why arm we not instantly?" cried the ardent youth: "every moment that now escapes me reproaches me with the sufferings of my country."

"Caution is still necessary," said Mo-nass: "I must at present require your submission to my dictates. Hear the plan I have devised as the first step to final success. At the conclusion of the feast of Bairam, the Turkish general Karen-bey will march against the Hungarians at the head of a powerful force."

"What art thou, wonderful man?" exclaimed the surprised prince. "The secrets of the divan are laid open before thee! Surely the genii of the air are subject to thy command?"

"Prince, let it suffice thee I am
rightly

rightly informed ; you well know it is even so. In that expedition you have an elevated command ; I must attend you."

" Thou attend me !" replied Castriot.

" So our plan demands. I shall assume a new disguise; the habit of a janizary, and shall accompany you as a private attendant. It is necessary you should return to Adrianople, and assume the command to which you are appointed, and appear there as if the shades of oblivion had for ever obscured the events of this night."

" Then be it so," said Castriot ; " the delay I am thus compelled to submit to shall add to the storm of vengeance, which now lowers over thy head, oh, Amurath !—here I disclaim the remembrance of the insidious benefits thou hast conferred, and remember thee only as the murderer of my kindred, and the usurper of my throne!"

Castriot

Castriot ceased, and Moneses, pointing to the patriot troop—"The friends," said he, "that you see, are but a few of the number who from time to time rendezvous in this place. I have informed them that their sovereign lives, and they have devoted themselves to the increase of our force. In various disguises they wander through Epirus, and only wait to see the standard of their prince wave upon the walls of Croia to declare themselves the avengers of the race of Castriot. And now, prince," continued Moneses, "you perceive the motive which prompted me to conduct you hither. A tale so strange would not have been credited, had not the witnesses of it been placed before your eyes."

"Prudence marks your counsels," said the prince, "and the suspense I have endured is amply repaid. But let us now hasten to Adrianople: every moment will lag on leaden pinions till the glorious hour of retribution." So saying,

saying, he followed Moneses from the cave amidst the shouts of the patriot band, and ascended the rude staircase: passing through the upper cavern, he inhaled the morning breeze, which greeted them at its entrance.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

"My desolation doth begin to make
A better life."

By the route which they had followed the preceding day, Castriot and Moneses returned to the glade in the forest, where, mounting their horses, they rapidly proceeded to Adrianople.

They entered the mausoleum before dawn, and by the vaulted passage reached the chamber where the prince had assumed the dervise's habit.

"Now, prince," said Moneses, "you may again become an officer of janizaries,

ries, but for a short period; soon I hope to see you in your proper character of prince of Epirus."

Castriot warmly replied—" So may your wishes succeed, as I will endeavour to be worthy of the throne of my ancestors !"

" We shall meet again on the morning when the troops march for Hungary; in the mean time, I shall equip myself as a janizary, to be prepared to attend you on that day."

" Farewell till then!" said Castriot; and following Moneses to the vaulted door by which they had entered, he found himself in the street, as the voice of the iman proclaimed the hour of morning prayer from the gallery of the minaret.

The prince returned to his caravan-sera, where his absence had passed unnoticed, as he was supposed to have been occupied in the celebration of the feast of Bairam.

Entering

Entering a private apartment, he threw himself on a couch, and sought to recruit his harassed faculties in a refreshing sleep.

The bodily fatigues which Castriot had experienced soon caused him to fall into a deep slumber; but though his corporeal frame reposed from exertion, the wakeful mind was occupied by dreams suggested by the strange and unlooked-for events of the preceding days. In imagination he again saw the cave of Mount Hæmus, its patriot-band, and their dervise chief; from thence he was transported to the royal palace of the kings of Epirus, and was seated on the throne of his ancestors, amidst the acclamations of his emancipated subjects, while the fair Greek who reigned in his heart was the partner of his throne, and seemed to smile her approbation of his patriotism and success.

From

From such enchanting visions he awoke to the contrasted certainty of his real situation, subjected to Amurath, and separate from Zemyra.

Impatient of the delay to which he must submit before he could declare himself the champion of his country, he looked with disgust upon the splendid habiliments of his rank as the badges of disgrace and slavery.

Reviewing the occurrences of the past days, he was sometimes inclined to refuse to adopt the means to be employed by Moneses at the outset, and he would have preferred an immediate and open avowal of his assertion of his claim to the throne of Epirus; yet the plan suggested by Moneses appeared the most prudent, and having promised to abide by his directions, he determined to adhere to the engagement.

Notwith-

Notwithstanding the zeal Moneses had evinced for his family and himself, the conduct and manners of that chieftain were by no means pleasing to the prince. In many parts of his narrative, he perceived the visible traits of vindictive passions and of crooked policy, and could plainly trace, through the veil of patriotism, the fierce features of revenge.

Occupied by such reflections as these, the hours passed unnoticed, and it was not till the approach of night that he descended from his apartment to partake of any refreshment.

Castriot endeavoured to dissipate the gloomy thoughts which occupied his mind by walking forth into the city, which presented a scene well calculated to enliven the most sombre disposition. The streets were one continued bower of garlands and festoons of flowers; bonfires blazed in the squares, and the illuminated

approved and veteran soldiers were chosen for the expedition, and the most experienced leaders selected to gage with the courage and ability of Huniades; under whose auspices the Hungarians had attained a pitch of military skill and intrepidity, which caused Amurath secretly to tremble on his throne, although he publicly affected to contemn their general and them as insignificant enemies.

Spring from obscure though honest parentage, this great commander had risen by rapid steps to the elevated situation of generalissimo of the united Christian forces which were now assembled in the plains of Hungary, and successfully repressed the ambitious projects of the Turkish sultan, who left no means untried for the extension of the dominion of Ottoman, and the promulgation of the faith of Mahomet.

Bernitz, the father of Huniades, had, in

in his earlier years, been a soldier; but disgusted with the tyranny of an officer, had left the army, and retired to his little patrimony in the village of Glützen, obscurely and romantically situated amidst the mountains of Walachia. There, with his wife and son, he lived in peaceful solitude; and as, from his early intercourse with the world, he had acquired ideas of a cast superior to those of the simple shepherds his neighbours, and finding little pleasure in their society, he devoted his time to the instruction of his son, who, excelling his companions as much in personal strength as he did in mental acquirements, was always the leader in their boyish sports. These were most frequently of a martial nature: the tales of war, which his father was accustomed to relate to him, inflamed his youthful mind with military ardour, and determined him to embrace the profession of a soldier.

At the age of sixteen, Huniades was permitted by his father to follow his darling pursuit. Under the standard of the warlike bishop of Zagravia in Italy, he gained the fame and experience of a veteran; and at the end of four years returned to his delighted parents, who gloried in their son, when they beheld the improvement years and a knowledge of the world had made in his person and manners.

Even in this seclusion, the active soul of Huniades spurned inglorious ease; he therefore re-organized his little troop, and by his military skill formed a village militia, capable of acting a defensive part against the predatory incursions of the forest bandits, or the foraging parties of the ferocious Turks.

Three years from the return of Huniades, Bernitz was sitting by his cheerful fireside, resting after the fatigues of
the

the day, relating to Huniades the history of the wars of his youth; and Eyda, twirling her spindle, was patiently listening to the oft-repeated tales, when a loud knocking at the door aroused their attention, and Huniades, starting up, opened it, when a tall figure, of commanding aspect, though clad in the garb of wretchedness, entering, petitioned for shelter during the night.

This was readily granted by the hospitable Bernitz, who invited him to occupy a seat near the fire, which invitation he accepted in silence, and reclining his head on his hand, seemed lost in a profound reverie.

Huniades, with pity and wonder, observed the strongly-marked features of their guest. His eyes seemed fixed on vacancy, and he uttered not a word, nor moved a muscle, till he was roused by

F 2

Eyda

Eyda inviting him to partake their frugal supper:

He rose; and silently and hastily finishing his meal, requested to be shewn to a bed; as he had travelled far that day, and rest would be most grateful.

Eyda, displeased with her uncourteous guest, led him to a chamber, and setting down the lamp, retired, saying—“The saints preserve you!”

The stranger, with a convulsive sight, uttered an emphatic—“Amen!”

On returning to her husband, Eyda found him and Huniades busied in conjectures about the melancholy stranger; but after a variety of suppositions; each of which was rejected for the succeeding; they could fix on nothing satisfactory, and all retired to rest.

The

The form of the stranger haunted the pillow of Huniades. All night long he could not sleep; his wakeful thoughts, were completely occupied by their guest.

Among many other conjectures, Berntz said he was probably some chieftain, whom a more powerful enemy had driven from his domains; and with this Huniades coincided, as it was most congenial to his own opinion.

Filled with this idea, he determined to go to the stranger and tender the assistance of his little troop to assist him in the repossession of his rights; and as the sun had already gilded the eastern summits of the mountains, he hastily threw on his simple garments, and with a heart big with enterprise, he knocked at the stranger's door.

It was opened by him, but his face had lost much of that despair which was

so strongly depicted in every feature on the preceding evening. Exhausted nature had sunk into a tranquil repose, and he had risen, calm and invigorated, with the first beams of morning.

"I crave pardon for disturbing your privacy," said Huniades, "but I have something of importance to communicate to you."

"Come in, young man," replied the stranger, "though I think you can have nothing to communicate which can be of importance to me."

"It is," Huniades hesitatingly answered, "that from your apparent distress and abstraction of mind, I supposed you had received some grievous wound in your family or property; for pardon me if I offend in declaring, that through the vestments of poverty in which you are clad, I can perceive evident marks of superior rank."

"Stay, young man," interrupted he,
"nor

" nor dare to wantonly probe the wounds
you have not the power to heal."

" Trust me, I would not; but if your
grief arises from the aggression of ene-
mies, I could probably render you as-
sistance," replied Huniades. " I have
been a soldier, and pass my leisure in
training a stout band of village youths
to military manœuvres; these obey me
as their chief, and will, I am well assured,
follow me with alacrity to the execution
of any enterprise."

" Brave man!" exclaimed the stranger,
" your warm and generous offer inspires
me with new life, and demands my full-
est confidence: accept the acknowledg-
ment of a brother soldier, for know, such
I am. You may perhaps have heard of
Lladomir, count of Bestrich?" continued
he.

" That question to an inhabitant of
Walachia, where the lisping infants are
not ignorant of the good and powerful
Lladomir!" replied Huniades.

The stranger paused a moment; despair seemed again to have established her throne in his heart, when by an effort dispelling the gloom of his countenance, he resumed—" Possessing his sovereign's favour, Lladomir was appointed to the government of Pedtitia, and fixed his residence in the fortified city of Pedt. This frontier post was continually exposed to the apprehension of a siege, as a large body of Turkish cavalry had ravaged the surrounding country to the very walls. The count, pleased even at its danger, took possession of his perilous station, and used his utmost endeavours to repress the ferocious invaders: but these were rendered abortive by the treachery of count Wencelaur, who, enraged at Lladomir's receiving such a distinguishing mark of his sovereign's favour, seized every opportunity of misrepresenting his actions and frustrating his plans, and employed an emissary for the purpose of gaining such

such intelligence as might further his master's insidious designs."

"Base cowards!" cried Huniades: "and will nobility stoop to such vile arts?"

"Vice," returned the stranger, "thinks no means, however base, too vile an engine to accomplish her diabolical purposes, and nobility can bend as low as the meanest vassal, when it has for its end the gratification of some vile passion. Lladonair," continued he, "had been wounded in the arm in a sally which he had made upon the Turks, who had daringly advanced to the very gates of the city. Having retired to rest, the perfidious Arvitz seized the opportunity to intoxicate the guards of one of the gates, and when the whole city was reposing in fancied security, admitted the Turks, who entered in such numbers that they soon overpowered the garrison; and Lladomir, after fighting as long as there appeared the least hope of success, escaped with difficulty through

a passage known only to himself. Burning with shame, and the desire of avenging himself on the author of his disgrace, Lladomir was pursuing his irksome journey to the capital, to declare to his sovereign the treachery of Arvitz, when halting at a village to recruit his exhausted frame, he heard the taking of Pedt by the Turks attributed to his own perfidy, and that the king, exasperated at his defection, had attainted his life and confiscated his estates. Struck mute with astonishment, he internally breathed a vow that he would become a voluntary exile from his country, until he could appear in it with the means of asserting his innocence, and of vindicating the hitherto-unstained honour of the name of Lladomir. With this resolution he proceeded on his journey, and avoiding the towns and villages, arrived at a hospitable cottage in the vale of Glutzen. Need I add, count Lladomir, of Bestrich, now stands before thee?"

" No,

"No, my lord," replied Huniades; "I was soon assured you were that much-injured nobleman: but I crave your pardon if I have unwittingly failed in demonstrations of respect which your rank demands."

"Young man," exclaimed the count, "your conduct needs no pardon, but demands my highest praise; and," added he, with a sigh, "the disgraced Lladomir has no longer any claim to the homage of the meanest vassal."

"My lord," said Huniades, warmly, "you have a stronger claim to respect as the virtuous though unfortunate Lladomir, than when, as the distinguished count Bestrich, the vicar of your sovereign, you exercised regal power over the extensive province of Pedtitia."

"Your sentiments," said the count, "would add grace to nobility, and your conduct so highly pleases me, that I will gladly accept your proffered assistance;

F 6

but

but I must engage your secrecy, as my name must be known to none but you."

" You may rely on my secrecy, my lord," Huniades rejoined, " and in a few hours all shall be prepared for our expedition."

Thus saying, he left the apartment, and with a heart abated with hope, sought the well-known haunts of his associates.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VI.

" He is as wise as brave —
My brave deliverer! thou shalt enter now
A nobler list, and in a monarch's sight
Contend with princes for the prize of fame."

The companions of Huniades readily acquiesced in a proposal so congenial to their pursuits and wishes, and with the earliest beams of the ensuing morning gaily commenced their route; and being well acquainted with the intricacies of the forest, pursued their devious march with rapidity, and halted with the setting sun on the brow of a hill, which displayed the end of their journey in the venerable towers of Pect, seen at a small distance.

Under

Under a frowning rock, where the hand of nature had formed a spacious cavern, the count conducted his small troop, and having stationed one of the party as sentinel at the mouth, the rest, wearied with the tedious march of the day, after a slight repast sought the repose their wearied bodies required.

Huniades, after a short sleep, disturbed by dreams of future glory, awoke, and revolving in his mind the unlooked-for events of the preceding day, found it impossible to gain more repose; he therefore left his rough couch, and walked to that part of the hill which commanded a view of the town.

While by the brilliant light of a full moon, which spread unclouded glories over the extended prospect, he marked the long-stretching ditch, the massive gates, and the frowning turrets, receiving an additional blackness from the contrast

trast formed by the moonbeams falling on the projecting bastions, his breast glowed with martial rapture, and he unconsciously walked on, absorbed in thought, till within a step of the edge of the precipice, when he was aroused from his reverie by a voice exclaiming—"Beware! you are on the brink of destruction."

Turning hastily round in mute surprise, Huniades beheld Lladomir, who, as little able to enjoy sleep as his young friend, had like him left the cave to enjoy the serenity of the night, and seeing Huniades walking near the precipice, he hastily approached to warn him of his danger.

Recovering from his astonishment, he expressed his gratitude to the count, and pointing to the city, said—"My lord, the scene which lies before us had drawn me

me from myself, and I walked unconscious of the danger I was so near."

"This scene," replied the count, "also presents overpowering sensations to me. Yester towering gate was that through which the emissary of Wenckebur, faithful to his lord, but treacherous to his king, admitted the enemy; and the underwood which fringes the little promontory jutting into the Danube, conceals the pass through which I escaped: it shall shortly aid me in a nobler purpose."

"Lead us instantly, my lord!" exclaimed the ardent Hunyadi: "let not another day behold your invasion still triumphant."

"Nor shall it," replied the count, "as my hopes greatly deceive me. Three hours before daybreak we descended to the pass, and by the favour of Heaven the rising sun shall again behold the stand and of Hungary on the walls of Pest."

"So

"So may we prosper!" replied Huniades. "I will now dismiss the sentinel to rest, and occupy his place till the hour appointed."

"You are a true soldier," said the count, grasping his hand, "and will be an acquisition to our monarch's army, to whom I hope to present you, if our enterprise is crowned with success."

Saying this, he retired into the cove, and Huniades having dismissed the sentinel, took his station, and counted the hours till the eventful period.

At the time proposed, the count having roused his sleeping auxiliaries, joined Huniades at the mouth of the cove, and proceeded on the march by a winding path which led to the brink of the river. In the little copse which the count had pointed out to Huniades from the top of the hill, an aged beech grew on a knoll, over which its roots spread in various

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conscious of the danger

"This scene," re-
presents overpow-
ering terrors
which the emi-
tial to his
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ently proceeded till they were
by a massy iron door, which
open on Lladomir's pressing a square
one in the pavement, and admitted
them into a small vault; at the oppo-
site end appeared a flight of steps, which
they ascended till they came to a long
narrow enclosure, where the count stop-
ped, and having beckoned to Huniades,
bade him look through a small crevice
in the wall.

Huniades

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Turkish gover-
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down from the
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"whispered
itz, the base author
The villain sleeps as if no gun
his conscience. In a few moments
shall stand at his couch, like the ave-
ning angel, and shall soon require your
assistance."

Before Hymades could reply, the count had disappeared, and on his again looking through the crevice, he beheld him in the chamber. Lladomir had entered by removing a panel, and with his sword drawn, stood by the couch of the guilty Arvitz.

Scarcely

rious directions, and with the long grass growing in luxurious abundance, concealed a cavity sufficiently large to admit a man in a creeping posture, but which, a few yards from the mouth, opened into a vaulted passage. Into this cavity Lladomir first entered, and was followed by his companions; and Huniades entering last, replaced the grass at the entrance, so that no traces of an opening were visible.

They silently proceeded till they were stopped by a massy iron door, which flew open on Lladomir's pressing a square stone in the pavement, and admitted them into a small vault; at the opposite end appeared a flight of steps, which they ascended till they came to a long narrow enclosure, where the count stopped, and having beckoned to Huniades, bade him look through a small crevice in the wall.

Huniades

Huniades did as bidden, and discovered a superb bedchamber, and on a richly-embroidered couch a man buried in sleep. All the appendages of the apartment bespoke the dignity and wealth of the occupier.

"That," whispered the count, "is Arvitz, the base author of my disgrace. The villain sleeps as if no guilt oppressed his conscience. In a few moments I shall stand at his couch, like the avenging angel, and shall soon require your assistance."

Before Huniades could reply, the count had disappeared, and on his again looking through the crevice, he beheld him in the chamber. Lladomir had entered by removing a panel, and with his sword drawn, stood by the couch of the guilty Arvitz.

Scarcely

Scarcely could the count resist the impulse which prompted him to inflict the blow. The man to whom he owed his disgrace lay sleeping at his mercy; his arm was lifted, but policy withheld the stroke which vengeance dictated; and striking with the hilt of his sword on the bed, he awoke the perfidious wretch from dreams of successful villainy.

"Knowest thou me, Arvitz?" said the count; "the banished disgraced Lladomir is doubtless an unwelcome intruder on thy repose."

Horror-struck, and speechless with astonishment, the detected traitor sunk back on the bed, from which he had started at the noise; a cold sweat bedewed his body, and his bloodless face scarcely appeared human.

"Speak, miscreant!" exclaimed the count;

count; "where rests the Turkish governor? Speak! or this sword shall rend thy treacherous heart."

"Olt, my lord!" cried Arvitz, falling at his feet, "spare a wretch whom the fear of his master urged to what he has done! Olt, spare my life; and I will reveal all!"

"Say on then," said Lladomir: "I will not stain my good sword with such unworthy blood, but leave thee to our country's justice. Where is the governor's apartment?"

"In the eastern turret," replied the trembling wretch:

"What is the number of the garrison?" asked Lladomir.

"But few, my lord," said Arvitz, "are left for the defence of the city. Fearless of an attack, the rest are foraging through the country."

"Your safety depends on the truth of your statement. Meanwhile you are my prisoner."

Thus

Thus saying, the count bound him with his scarf to the couch, and opening the panel, called Huniades and his friends into the chamber.—“Behold,” said he, “the earnest of our success! from this prisoner I have learned that the garrison is small, and will doubtless be an easy prey. Let us on to conquest!”

“Lead on, my lord,” cried Huniades, “and doubt not our readiness to follow.”

The count traced the well-known way to the governor’s apartment, at the door of which a guard was stationed, who seeing a band of armed men approach, gave the alarm. In a moment Huniades had levelled him to the earth, and Lladomir penetrated to the chamber, where the governor, roused from his sleep, was easily made a prisoner. The alarm was now spread through the fortress, and the affrighted half-clad soldiers ran to arms in terror and confusion, while the vil-

lagers

lagers dealt around their blows, almost without encountering any resistance.

At length the Turks, recovering from the surprise which the suddenness of the attack had thrown them into, and perceiving the small number of their enemies, pressed them so closely, that they were compelled to retreat into the turret. There the little band defended themselves with desperate valour, that would have reflected honour on veterans. Huniades, facing every danger, was in himself a battalion. Seven of the most forward of the assailants fell beneath the stroke of his well-aimed sabre, when in the full career of glory, his arm was pierced by an arrow. His sword fell from his nerveless grasp; and writhing under the bitter disappointment he felt at being obliged to leave his post, he reclined on a bench, and beheld two of his followers successively fall, who had stepped forward to supply his place.

Infuriate

Inflnitiate at the sight, he rushed to the top of the tower, and leaning over the battlements, he beheld a crowd of the inhabitants under its walls, whom the uproar in the citadel had drawn from their beds.

"Fellow-Christians, fellow-countrymen!" exclaimed Huniades, "a band of heroes, who have volunteered their lives to deliver you from the slavery of your tyrants, are encompassed by the superior numbers of the garrison in this tower. Be men! be yourselves! and rush boldly on the assailants; and let the signal be—'Victory and liberty! our God and our king!'"

The words were caught with enthusiasm by the crowd, who, shouting the transporting sound, "Victory and liberty!" from man to man, rushed with resistless force against the massive portes, which they forced open, and with the rapidity

rapidity of lightning, armed with the weapons which the exigence of the moment supplied, slew those of the Turks who still resisted, and soon overpowered and took the rest prisoners.

The triumphant shouts of the victors soon communicated the welcome news to the citizens, who crowded to the castle from all quarters of the city, and recognizing their former beloved governor, expressed their joy in the most extravagant gestures and loud acclamations.

When the populace had dispersed, and the town become more tranquil, Lladomir and Huniades having made the necessary arrangements for securing their conquest, retired to rest, with joyful hearts and bright expectations of future happiness.

Lladomir's first care on the succeeding

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G

morning

morning was to send Huniades to Buda, with dispatches informing the king of the recapture of Pedt, and containing a statement of his innocence, which was confirmed by the confession of Arvitz; he also dwelt with friendly zeal on the noble conduct of Huniades, to whose bravery and skill the success of the enterprise was chiefly to be attributed.

On the third day after his departure, Huniades returned to Pedt, the happy bearer of the welcome tidings of the count's reinstatement in his former honours and possessions, the king having gladly received the statement of his innocence; and every doubt being set aside by the conduct of the perfidious Wenceslaus, who, on being taxed with his guilt, found means to fly the kingdom, before the justice due to his crimes could reach him.

Further to testify his warm approbation,

bation of Lladonir's conduct, his majesty conferred upon him the command of all Pedtitia, and the whole frontier along the Danube, and appointed Huniades his lieutenant, and commander of the fine body of cavalry, at the same time graciously expressing to Lladonir the pleasure with which he beheld such an accession to his army as the abilities of Huniades predicted he would certainly be.

Vladislaus, king of Hungary and Poland, had been called from the throne of the latter to occupy also the regal seat of the former kingdom, by an assembly of the states, convened on the demise of Albert, who died without issue. Being king of Poland in his own right, the union of two such powerful monarchies was viewed with jealousy and fear by the Turkish emperor, who, before Vladislaus was firmly established

in his newly-acquired dominion, attacked him with a formidable force.

The war was prosecuted with various success on both sides; and at the time that Huniades brought the intelligence of the reduction of Peda, Vladislaus was preparing a powerful army for the relief of Belgrade.

Huniades used his delegated authority to great advantage. Every day added new trophies of victory, and diminished the Turkish forces. Being continually on the watch for every advantage, he in a short time entirely cleared the frontier of the restless enemy, and compelled them to retire across the Danube into Bulgaria.

The experience Huniades gained in his numerous skirmishes with the Turks had so much improved his military skill, that

that he successively defeated the most experienced of the sultan's bashaws; the impetuosity of his youth became corrected by judgment, and to an increased knowledge of military tactics he added great prudence. Such was the man on whom the suffrages of his countrymen conferred the titles of the Bulwark of Hungary and the Sword of Christendom—titles the experience of his enemies told them he too well merited.

While thus successfully employing his arms against the enemies of his country, his heart was open to the attacks of the universal conqueror—love. The bright eyes and graceful demeanour of Alwena, the only daughter of his patron the count, had made an indelible impression on him. Long did he sigh in secret, fearing to address the mistress of his soul, lest she, receiving him with indifference, might deem him presumptuous, and Lladomir accuse him of arrogance.

rogance and ingratitude, in attempting to gain the affections of his daughter, so far exalted above him by her noble birth.

How little did he know the heart of the fair Alwena ! Superior to the generality of her sex in personal beauty, her mind rose above sordid considerations. She had admired Husnades from the first moment she saw him ; she respected his shining qualities, and she loved him for his bravery and strength of mind, which she had innumerable opportunities of witnessing ; but she thought his whole soul so filled with military glory and patriotic ardour, that he had no room for the softer passion.

Such were the reflections of those unconscious lovers. Alike ignorant of each other's affection, they sighed in secret. But although unknown to themselves, their love did not escape the notice of
Lladomir.

Ladomir. He saw their mutual attachment, and rejoiced at an event which he had long secretly wished might take place.

Having determined to explain his intentions to Huniades, he sent for him into his closet, and said to him—" My young friend, your services to our country have been rewarded by our wise and beneficent monarch, but those you have so freely and disinterestedly rendered to myself have never yet been recompensed. I have now a gift to proffer, which, if I augur rightly, will not be unworthy your acceptance."

" My dear lord," replied Huniades, " you have been all goodness; you can bestow no reward beyond what I already possess, in being permitted to serve near your person."

" Do not attempt to disguise your wishes, which are equally grateful to me, and, as I conjecture, to my daughter,"

ter," returned Lladomir. "Alwena's hand shall discharge to Huniades the debt of gratitude her father has incurred."

Huniades' heart was too full of joyful astonishment to speak his thanks; and before he could recover from his surprise the count had left the closet, and in a few moments returned, leading in his daughter, who blushingly presented her hand to the enraptured Huniades; who exclaimed—"Dearest, fairest of women, if a heart overflowing with love and gratitude can be worthy of your regard, and repay this angelic condescension, that, and a life devoted to your service, are irrevocably yours."

"I can duly appreciate the gift," returned Alwena; "and trust you will not deem me too candid if I acknowledge you have long held a high place in my esteem, and that my heart accompanies the hand I now give you."

In

In a few days the marriage of Huniades and Alwena was celebrated with every demonstration of magnificence and joy, in the cathedral church of Pedt, by the bishop of the province, on which occasion Huniades was created baron of Targovisk by the king, as a reward for his unceasing diligence, and a stimulus to future exertions.

CHAPTER VII.

————— “ Oh, sacred Liberty!

Upborne by thee, my soul disdain'd the terms
Of empire, offer'd at the hands of tyrants.
With thee I sought this favourite soil—with thee
These favourite sons I sought.

BELGRADE, the key of Hungary, fortified on two of its sides by the Danube and the Saave, presented an impregnable barrier to the Turkish general, Mezitis, being compelled to raise the siege, after having lost an immense number of troops by the sallies of the besieged, and by the continual incursions of Huniades, who continually harassed the camp.

Provoked

Provoked almost to madness at this failure, Amarah dispatched a large reinforcement, with orders to the bashaw to ravage the whole country round Belgrade, so that the city, being driven to extremity, might surrender. This command, so congenial to Turkish ferocity, was performed to the letter, through the whole country, extending his ravages to the very suburbs of the city.

Huniades assembled a strong force on hearing of this new attack; and having by forced marches come up with the Turkish army, gave them battle; and though at the first onset his wings were repulsed by the heavy cavalry of the Turks, yet his troops soon rallied, and a complete victory crowned the bravery and conduct of the Hungarian leader and his army, the Turkish general being compelled to provide for his personal safety by a timely flight.

This victory was followed by others more brilliant, gained by Huniades, Vladislaus, and the despot of Servia, over the forces under the command of scheich Habedin and Isah-beg. Stimulated by such success, from merely repelling the attacks of the Turks they pursued their good fortune, and marched to the foot of Mount Haemus, the rampart of Amurath's dominions in Thrace and Macedon.

The immense body of forces which had been formed with such expedition under the command of the bashaw Karun-bey, on the morning after the Bairam marched in high spirits from the gates of Adrianople. Every precaution had been taken to ensure the success of the enterprise in the equipment of the army; and the troops, calculating upon an easy victory and a great booty, entered the fastnesses of Mount Haemus in the confident hope of soon returning

ing laden with the spoil of the Christian camp.

The policy of Amurath had dictated in private to his general very different instructions from those which were publicly given, directing him to chastise those enemies of Mahomet and of Othman, and to bring their presumptuous general in chains to the footstool of Amurath; while these strictly charged him to act only upon the defensive in his movements against the enemy—to possess himself of all the unoccupied passes of the mountains, and to reinforce those troops which already defended the principal avenues.

He also cautioned Karem-bey against hazarding a general engagement, though the most specious opportunity and the most advantageous ground should offer, and to refrain from all offensive operations till the ensuing spring, when he himself

himself intended to take the field against this his now most formidable enemy.

Of a brave and enterprising character, Karan-bey received these restricting mandates with feigned obedience, though he internally despised them, and resolved to seize the first pretence for disobeying commands so uncongenial to his warlike soul.

On his arrival at Mount Hemus, his repugnance to obedience was increased by the report his spies brought him of the dispirited state of the Hungarian army: it required the utmost address and skill in Huniades to restrain the troops from mutiny; discontented, and complaining at the approach of winter and the scarcity of provisions, which that mountainous district but scantily afforded, they were ready to desert their standards; and having made many fruitless attempts to force the impregnable barrier

barrier which the fortified passes of the mountain opposed, they had actually begun to retreat, when the troops of Karim-bey appeared.

Hunisades, whose indomitable spirit seemed to rise in proportion to the difficulties which presented themselves, represented to them that their greatest dangers were now past, and that the plains of Thrace would soon afford them a more temperate climate and ample supplies; that to desert the advantages they had gained would be to throw away the good fortune which lay within their grasp; and that it was more difficult for them to return through the uncultivated country they had already traversed, than to penetrate the passes of the mountain before them.

These encouraging words of their beloved general were received with acclamations by the troops, who loudly proclaimed

claimed their willingness to follow his standard to death or victory.

Karem-bey, informed of the state of the enemy, regardless of the positive restrictions of the sultan, detached a strong body against Huniades, of whose army, dispirited by want and the severity of the climate, he expected to make an easy conquest.

This movement did not escape the ever-vigilant eye of Huniades, who immediately put himself at the head of a troop of Walachian cavalry, and rushed upon the Turks with irresistible impetuosity, who, surprised at a resistance they little expected, retired in precipitate haste.

Eight times the attack was renewed by Karem-bey, who, from his elevated situation on a rugged hill, perceived the successive discomfiture of his battalions, and

and restraining his fury no longer, determined to pour the whole force of his army upon the Hungarians, whose resistance he felt convinced could be neither long nor effectual; and his superiority of numbers, as well as the advantage of the ground, gave him full assurance of success.

Having formed this resolution, he issued his commands for the army to advance; and the battle commenced with a furious attack by the Turkish horse upon the van of Huniades' army, composed of the Hungarian cavalry and light-armed Polish infantry.

The Turkish cavalry, in which Castriot held the second command, advanced with impetuosity, and determined valour on both sides marked the fierce contest,

Castriot, who had been joined, as was previously

previously concerted, by Moneses as a janizary, entered the field with a repugnance unusual to him, and kept in the rear, to avoid, as much as possible, engaging actively in fight against those whom he now considered as friendly allies. The commander of the cavalry, who had been raised to that post by well-timed bribes to the vizier, was ill fitted for the situation; and far from appearing at the head of his men, animating them by his example, he advanced not from the rear, but contented himself with issuing his orders from that secure station.

The cavalry, perceiving themselves deserted by their leaders, soon lost the confident impulse with which they commenced the attack, and retreated in confusion before the steady and persevering bravery of their opponents upon the ranks of the infantry.

This

This was the signal for the united forces of Hungary and Poland to advance; and they who till then had contented themselves with repelling the furious onset of their enemies, rushed upon them at the inspiring command of their general with redoubled fury.

Karem-bey, perceiving that all was now at stake, bravely put himself at the head of the janizaries; and exhorting his troops to courage by promises of riches and honours, or terrifying them by threats of tortures and death, the battle was most furiously renewed on both sides. But the slaves of a despot are ill matched with the men who fight for their hearths and their altars, their homes and their religion; and the valour of Huniades, seconded by soldiers who loved and respected him as a man and a general, bore down all opposition, and the few cohorts that escaped the slaughter were either taken prisoners or obliged to

to retreat to the most impregnable fastnesses of the mountain.

Amidst the confusion of the flight, Karem-bey was taken; as he was endeavouring to make his escape, his charger plunged into a deep morass, where he was secured by an Hungarian soldier.

Huniades, recognizing the bashaw in the soldier's tent after the battle, ordered a large remuneration to be given to the captor, and commanded a tent to be erected near his own for the reception of the prisoner, where he might be treated with the distinction his rank, bravery, and misfortunes demanded.

Nothing could have happened more advantageously for the furtherance of the design of Castriot and Moneses than the confusion occasioned by the retreat. With a chosen troop of adherents, who had joined them from the woods, in the
habiliments

habiliments of Turkish soldiers, they marked the reis effendi of Karem-bey, as he fled from the field, and urged his rapid steed through a defile of the mountains.

Being far better mounted than the effendi, they soon came up with him, and saluted him as friends, lamenting, at the same time, the unfortunate and bloody termination of the day.

Pereceiving themselves to be unobserved by the pursuers or the pursued, as the defile became narrower, and the beetling rocks on either side approached so near as almost to unite their threatening masses, at a preconcerted signal given by Moneses, the effendi was surrounded and disarmed by the band who attended their prince. He was commanded to be silent by Castriot, and informed that the least sound from him would

would draw down their instant vengeance.

The fearful secretary, intimidated at these threats, silently submitted, and was hurried along through unfrequented defiles, till they completed their tedious journey, by entering the cave of the mountains.

The fear and wonder of the trembling effendi were increased when he entered the subterranean cavity. Horror-struck, he saw the massive rock removed, and the narrow staircase discovered, and found himself a moment after immersed in palpable darkness. On entering the spacious cavern, he shrunk back in dismay at the uncouth objects which on every side met his eye; and before he could recover from his surprise, materials for writing were placed on the rugged table, while Castriot dictated to him the

the terms in which he should address letters to the governor of Creia.

The effendi refused compliance, on which the naked cimeters of the prince and of Moneses gleamed over his head.

"Proceed," cried Castriot, "or instant destruction shall shortly leave thee without the power!"

The secretary tremblingly obeyed, and wrote, in the name of Karem-bey, as viceroy of the Ottoman dominions in Europe, to the governor of Creia, commanding him instantly, on the arrival of the "*well-beloved Sanjak Iskander-beg*," to deliver to him the fort and city of Creia, and to repair to Adrianople with the troops under his command.

This document was sealed with the signet of the bashaw, and attested in the usual way by the reis effendi.

"Now,"

"Now," said Moneses, "the first step for our present security is to prevent the intelligence of our stratagem reaching the sultan, and the surest plan is to silence the secretary."

"What dost thou mean?" hastily inquired the prince.

"The death of the effendi," replied Moneses: "policy dictates the destruction of him who might blast our design by escaping, and divulging it to Amurath."

"If such be her crooked paths," answered Castriot, "I would willingly renounce the laws of policy for ever."

"A prince cannot," said Moneses; "and the measure I propose is necessary at the present crisis."

"No, Moneses!" exclaimed Castriot; "much as I am already indebted to thee—much as I long to behold my native land, and to emancipate from her galling chains the country of my fathers, rather would I be taxed with ingratitude—rather

ther forego the glorious work I have so happily begun, and wander over the world a wretched exile, my dearest hopes all blasted, than stain my name with such a coward deed as this."

"Be it so then, my lord," replied Moneses, frowning; "but the hour may come, when you will rue this untimely clemency. Do you intend to discharge the effendi?" continued he. "Doubt not he will repay your kindness by hastening to Adrianople."

"No," said the prince; "although I will not stain my soul with his blood, yet I will regard my own safety, and the success of our enterprise. This cave affords ample security to detain him our prisoner."

"It does," answered Moneses. "Your recess, secured by a massy iron door, shall be his prison. I will select a faithful guard."

"It is well," rejoined the prince. "That done, we hasten to Croia."

Having partaken of a slight repast while the necessary arrangements were making for securing the secretary, Moneses led the prince to an intricate part of the forest, which embowered the base of the mountain, saying to him—"Now, my lord, we are at the place appointed for the rendezvous of our escort."

"Why are they not here?" cried the impatient prince. "Not a moment should now be lost,"

The talismanic signal was again shouted by Moneses, and no sooner was it uttered, than a hundred voices repeated—"Allah bismillah!" from all sides.

To the astonished prince the wood seemed vocal, and the visions of antiquity, which peopled every tree with a dryad, seemed to be realized before his face.

If his surprise was great at the sounds
which

which echoed the words of Momeses; his consternation was greater at the sudden appearance of a mimetic troop of Turkish cavalry, which appeared issuing from the wood in all directions.

"What means this?" exclaimed Castriot, in strong perturbation. "Why are we thus surrounded by the bands of our foe?"

"To be our escort to Epirus," replied Momeses. "These are our friends, whom I have caused to be thus disguised. We shall need their services to garrison Croia."

"This is beyond my hopes!" exclaimed the prince; and mounting a charger provided for him, was followed by Momeses. Hastily placing themselves at the head of their band, they proceeded with eager rapidity to the execution of their bold design.

When Castriot entered his native
country,

country, every step he advanced convinced him that the picture drawn by Moneses of the oppressive tyranny which the Epirots groaned under was by no means exaggerated. His soul was stung with anguish to see the cruel despotism which the hand of power exercised over a people whose only crime was an inability to resist the oppressor; and he cursed the perfidy of the sultan, who treated a nation as vanquished whom he had acknowledged as an ally.

No impediment obstructed the march of the patriot band, the arrival of troops from Turkey occurring so frequently, that the distressed Epirots, hopeless of emancipation from the galling yoke, had long ceased to notice their arrival; and the Turks whom they occasionally encountered cordially exchanged their *salaams* with those whom they thought fellow-soldiers.

The

The province of Dibra, to which Castriot first directed his course, was a rough tract of mountainous country, which was but nominally subjected to the Turkish government. The hardy inhabitants, for the most part, still preserved their independence amidst the fastnesses of their mountains.

Here Hamesa, the son of Castriot's uncle, had fled from the pursuit of Turkish vengeance, and the presence of a prince of the blood had attracted many of the Epirots to this retreat; and at the time of Castriot's arrival in Epirus, his cousin was at the head of a force of four hundred stout well-appointed soldiers.

To him Moneses had sent a messenger, advertising him of the coming of the prince, his cousin, and requesting him to be ready, with his band, to assist

sist the enterprise as occasion might require.

This was intelligence the most grateful to Hamesa, who had long eagerly wished for an opportunity to retaliate upon the Turks the wrongs his country had suffered.

When Amurath had secured the princes of Epirus as hostages, Hamesa, then a youth, was also sent to Adrianople, where he was educated to fill, at a future period, the rank of an officer of janizaries. In the school, the eunuch to whose charge he was entrusted, in obedience to the positive commands of his sovereign, endeavoured to eradicate from the mind of his pupil the remembrance of his country and his family; but in this he was deceived.

Hamesa, perceiving the treachery used

used towards his relatives, dissipated his feeling of resentment, and appeared to be perfectly satisfied with his situation, resolving, at the same time, to seize the earliest occasion to escape to his native land.

Ignorant of the fate of his cousins, or of the wretched state to which Epirus was reduced, he embraced an opportunity to escape to Smyrna, where he embarked in a merchant-ship bound for Venice; and having learnt on his voyage the miserable tyranny under which Epirus groaned, he purchased, on his arrival at Venice, the garb of an Albanian peasant, and in this disguise reached Dibra in safety, by a strange coincidence, on the same day that Moneas conducted Castriot to the cave of Mount Hamesa.

Time had not so much changed the lineaments of Hamesa's expressive countenance but he was soon recognized by

Dunatis, an old warrior, who had been governor of Stellusa in the reign of the late king.

The joyful tidings of Hamesa's arrival soon spread through the bands of the patriots of Dibra. A spy, sent by Moneses, had that day arrived from the south of Epirus, and he bore the news of this acquisition to their strength to Moneses, who communicated to Hamesa immediately the plan of the projected design, and requested him to be ready, with all the force he could muster, to join them on their arrival in Epirus.

This he had so well performed, that four hundred effective troops were already organized, and prepared with arms and equipments, and inflamed with ardour to quench the flames of their vengeance in the blood of the oppressors of their country.

On

On seeing a numerous body of Turkish soldiers confidently approaching their retreat, the troops of Hamesa prepared to rush upon them with impetuous eagerness; but from this they were restrained by their chief, who soon dispelled their doubts, by informing them that they were friends and compatriots, and thus disguised the better to effect the intended surprise of the city and garrison of Croia.

This was confirmed by their seeing Castriot dismount and greet his cousin affectionately, who cordially returned his embrace, saying—"This is a day I have long wished ardently to behold. My country rises to revenge. The greatest favour you can now confer on me is to afford me an opportunity of evincing my ardour in her cause."

"Your zeal is to me an omen of success," replied the prince. "I shall even

now need your assistance, to penetrate
my secretary, to press it, and propitiate
the governor of Creia for my arrival."

"I hasten to obey you," answered
Hanness; and having assumed the ne-
cessary dress, he repaired to Creia.

Great was the surprise of the governor
when informed by the feigned secretary,
that his master, Iskanderbeg, would
shortly approach, by virtue of official
letters from Karem-bey, bashaw of Ro-
mania, to assume the command of the
city of Creia. But great as was his al-
tonishment, he did not hesitate to give
credit to the assertions of the secretary;
and Castriot shortly after arriving with
his retinue, and presenting the letters,
with the well-known signet of the ba-
shaw affixed to them, he kissed the man-
date, in token of his ready acquiescence,
and prepared for his instant departure;
and with an escort of his principal offi-
cers,

sets, and the greater proportion of the garrison troops, he was soon on his road to the metropolis.

Castriot having thus gained the command of the fort, and placed the soldiers which had accompanied him in the most important situations, his next care was to bring in the remainder of his troops, who had been ordered to approach as near to the city as they could without suspicion, and to remain concealed in the woods. Conducted by Dumatia, they had approached within half-a-league, and now anxiously waited further directions.

For this purpose Castriot dispatched Hameta, who succeeded so well in the execution of his orders, that the troops were admitted into the city by a private postern, without the least suspicion being excited in the Turkish soldiers who still remained in the garrison.

To gain easier possession of the citadel, Castriot displaced all the sentinels, and filled their places with his own men.

When all had been prepared, the prince, at the head of one band, and Hamesa and Moneses each commanding another, threw off their Turkish dresses, and appeared in the garb of native Epirots, the troops exclaiming—"Our prince and our country! We are slaves no longer! Down with the oppressors!"

With shouts like these the patriot bands attacked the astonished Turks in every direction, who, being taken by surprise, made a feeble resistance; but when the cause of the unusual clamour became known to the citizens—when it was published, that the sons of Epirus had at length determined to shake off
the

the yoke of oppression, and were in arms against their tyrants—that the governor was at their head, and that governor was their native prince, the son of their regretted monarch, the spark of patriotism quickly burst into a conflagration, and seizing the first weapon that presented itself, the citizens, with loud acclamations, hastened to assist their countrymen in the glorious work of freedom.

The troops of Castriot, inspirited by this succour, prosecuted their successes with fresh ardour; the enfeebled resistance of the enemy soon ceased, and the prince having detained the troops as prisoners of war, permitted the Turkish inhabitants to depart unmolested.

Such was the brilliant success attending Castriot's first expedition for the deliverance and recovery of his kingdom.

The

The strongest fort and principal city in Epirus was now in his possession, and he might reasonably hope many of the other cities would follow the example of the metropolis.

But his active spirit suffered no time to escape him ; he determined to prosecute the advantages he had gained, and for that purpose, leaving Moesces in Croia, he proceeded through the south of Epirus, and dispatched Hamesa into the province of Dibra, to apprise the inhabitants of the surrender of the metropolis, and to stimulate them to take up arms against their tyrants, and assert their rights as freemen against the slaves of despotism.

From Croia, Castrion marched against Petrella, the garrison of which, terrified at the fate of the capital, yielded to the prince at the first summons. Having taken

taken precautions for its defence, he proceeded to Petra Alba, which, together with Stellissa, surrendered on the same terms as had been granted to Croia and Petrella.

All the fortified towns of less consequence followed the example of the principal cities, and in a few days the standard of Castriot waved from the walls of every tower and fort in Epirus; and such was the devotion of the inhabitants to his cause, that the peasantry flocked from every corner of the kingdom to rally around the banner of their prince.

Thus, in a very short space, Castriot recovered the kingdom of his ancestors, which had so long groaned under the Turkish yoke. The triumph of bravery and patriotism over tyranny was complete: a prince and people co-operating heartily

heartily and unanimously in the same glorious work, presented a barrier not easily surmounted by the slaves of despotism or the minions of tyranny.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Now all's his—
When by and by the din of war 'gan pierce
His ready sense.”

THE authority of Castriot was now so firmly established in Epirus, that the whole kingdom presented one continued scene of happy tranquillity. No longer now in dread of their tyrants, the liberated peasants returned to the labours of agriculture with confident alacrity. Happy in the prospect of gathering the fruits of their toil, they cheerfully laboured in committing the seed to the bosom of the earth; and while they looked round, and beheld the happy change which had taken

taken place in their once-wretched country, the name of Castriot was echoed with blessings from every lip, and their children were taught to lisp the praises of their sovereign and deliverer.

The rage of Amurath was unbounded when the governor of Croia returned, bringing the news of the escape of the prince of Epirus, and the revolt of that kingdom, which he had learnt before he passed the frontiers of Amathia.

The enraged sultan vowed the most signal vengeance upon the traitor, as he styled Castriot; and his rebellious countrymen; but he was at present compelled to content himself with threats, since the successes of Huniades and the Hungarians obliged him to direct his whole force to that quarter, as he trembled for the safety of his European dominions.

Avaling

Availing himself of this respite, which, from the well known character of Amarrath, he was assured would be but short, Castrion divided his kingdom into governments, which he assigned to Moneses, Hamesa, and Uracontes.

Having formed these arrangements, he made a progress through the whole frontier which was exposed to incursions from the adjoining Turkish territory, repairing the decayed fortifications, erecting new, and recruiting his army with the hardy peasantry, who volunteered with eagerness in the service of a prince whose glorious successes in the field, and amiable qualities in peace, had secured the affections of all his subjects.

To exercise his recruits in the duties of active service, he made reprisals upon the neighbouring territories of Macedonia, from whence he returned laden with booty; thus enriching his followers, and

and retaliating upon his enemies. By these means his troops acquired military experience, and the armed force of Epirus was soon in a condition to make a successful stand against the armies of the sultan.

While the thoughts of Castriot were occupied in the operations of war, he had little leisure for the feelings of love, which had filled his soul at the time of his short acquaintance with Zemyra; her remembrance continually lived in the recesses of his heart, but the unlooked-for events which had happened to him since his departure from Asia had smothered, though not quenched, the flame which the fair captive had kindled in his breast.

In the moments of leisure which the peace of his kingdom now permitted, he wandered and dwelt on the bright vision which had risen to his enraptured gaze, and

and vanished from his sight he feared for ever.

Like a rapid stream, impeded in its course, when the torrent sleeps in deceitful silence, till the accumulated waves surmount the barrier with a force increased by the obstacle, it descends with redoubled violence, and sweeps before it all opposition, the love of Castriot returned with greater vehemence, and the flame was augmented and fanned by the absence of the beloved object. Fair and lovely as she was, his warm imagination arrayed her in new beauties, and in silence he worshipped the deity of his idolatry.

But this *distant* adoration was ill suited to the ardour of the enamoured prince; he longed once more to behold the object of his affections—the subject of his daily meditations. He became abstracted and thoughtful, revolving on a thousand

sand plans to ascertain whether she was at Venice, to which place she had sailed from Mondania.

This he knew not how to perform without disclosing the secret of his attachment; and to this he felt such a strong repugnance that he rejected the thought instantly, and determined to make a tour to the coast of the kingdom, and from one of the nearest ports sail to Venice, and endeavour there to gain tidings of the beloved object of his unextinguished love.

For this journey he was making preparations, when he was compelled to set aside all thoughts of putting his design into execution, by information having reached him that Amurath was preparing an immense force, with a determination to reduce the whole kingdom, and to punish the prince and his subjects with the exemplary vengeance due to such audacious traitors.

The

The command of this army was given to Haly, one of the most experienced generals in the Turkish service. It consisted of forty thousand select troops, as the sultan was resolved that nothing should be omitted that could contribute to the success of the expedition.

The report of this powerful force being quickly spread through Epirus, threw the inhabitants into the greatest consternation; they anticipated nothing less than a renewal of the despotism from which the bravery of their prince had so lately emancipated them, and the perpetration of greater enormities than they had ever yet experienced.

But Cassiobri heard without dismay the report of the mighty army which was destined to overwhelm his kingdom in ruin. The fame of his former successes had gained him a great number of allies, who thought it their impious duty

duty to assist in defending a Christian prince against the sworn foe to their religion.

The Italian states, and particularly the pope and the Venetian republic, assisted him with large supplies, so that his own force, and that of his allies, composed a strong body of well appointed troops.

Having garrisoned his fortified towns, he marched against the formidable army of Haly, whose coming he awaited on the frontiers, where he encamped in a declivity having a thick wood in his rear, in which he placed an ambush of three thousand men, under the command of Hamesa and Musachi, a brave general, with orders to remain concealed until they should perceive the armies engaged in the heat of battle, while he himself in the centre, with Uracontes duke of Ambracia in the left wing, and Moneses in the

the right, appeared in the open field ready to engage the forces of the bashaw.

Scarcely had these judicious dispositions been made, when the vanguard of Haly's army appeared entering the extremity of the valley. Their approach was announced by the loud shouts of the soldiers, the blast of trumpets, the clattering of cymbals, and the rolling of the echoing drums, while the splendour of their martial habiliments, their silken banners waving in the gentle breeze, and their polished arms reflecting the blazing effulgence of the setting sun as he sunk behind the rugged mountains of Albania, seemed to proclaim the triumphal return of a victorious host, rich with the spoils of a conquered country, rather than of an army marching into a hostile territory, and about to engage a resolute and experienced enemy.

The rising beams of the morning had scarcely dispelled the vapours of the mountains, when the clanging trumpets sounded the battle-charge to either army. The Turkish general, despising the comparatively small number of Castriot's forces, feared nothing but the judicious order in which they were drawn up: to break it, he detached a small body of cavalry, and commanded them to retire after the first attack, hoping, by this feint, to draw the prince's army from its advantageous position, and by throwing it into confusion, gain an easy victory. But in this expectation he was disappointed, for Castriot, perceiving the enemy's design, strictly forbade his troops to move from their ranks till the collected force of the Turks should be brought against them.

Haly, perceiving that his stratagem had failed, ordered the whole army to advance to the charge. His command was obeyed with

with promptitude and alacrity. Fiercely raged the battle on every side; but in the centre, where the chosen troops of Castriot, the hardy Albanians, were opposed to the janizaries of Haly, the work of destruction raged with redoubled fury.

Here for a moment the fortune of Castriot seemed to be at a stand; the presence of the bashaw animating his men to extraordinary acts of bravery, and even the valour of the Epirot prince, who with his sword-arm bare directed the thunder of the battle, could not compel this firm phalanx to give way.

Just at this crisis, when victory seemed to hover over the armies with doubtful wings, the genius of Castriot again triumphed. The ambuscade commanded by Hamesa rushed from the wood with loud acclamations, and fell upon

the left wing of the enemy with resistless impetuosity.

Astonished at this unexpected attack, the Turks believed that a fresh army was arrived to the assistance of their adversaries, and, impressed with the thought that all resistance would be vain, they instantly gave way in all directions, and retreated in the greatest confusion.

Seeing all was irrevocably lost, Haly sought his own safety in flight, and returned with the poor remnant of his mighty army to Adrianople, where the sultan, enraged at his failure, upbraided him with cowardice, and degraded him from his command. But after the heat of passion was past, reflecting that the fidelity and bravery of Haly had been apparent in former battles, and having proved him to be an experienced general,

ral, he reinstated the bashaw in his former office and dignities.

This signal victory left Castriot in possession of the enemy's tents and baggage; two thousand prisoners and twenty-four standards attested the superiority of the few patriotic Epirots over the Turkish myriads.

Having pursued the fugitive Turks far into Macedonia, he returned rich in the plunder of his boasting enemies, and made his triumphant entry into the capital of his emancipated kingdom amidst the rapturous acclamations of his joyful subjects, who hailed him by the well-merited appellations of Champion of Freedom, and Saviour of Epirus.

The misfortunes of Amurath succeeded each other so rapidly, he having received intelligence of fresh victories gained by the Hungarians, that they threw the

imperious monarch into a gloomy despondence, and he was ready to terminate, by suicide, that existence which he found almost insupportable.

Accustomed to almost continual successes, his haughty spirit was indignant at the reverse of fortune, and in the bitterness of his soul he invoked the terrible Azrael, the angel of death, to seize his troubled soul.

From these melancholy thoughts he was diverted by the vizier, who persuaded him, with much difficulty, to seek peace with Vladishus, as he then would be at liberty to employ his forces against Caramania, whose sultan was again in arms, and had attacked his dominions on the eastern side of the Bosphorus. The vizier also added, that having repelled the invasion of the Caramanian King, he might have an opportunity of chastising in person the insolence of the traitor

traitor Castriot, whose audacity would be unlimited till checked by his powerful arm.

These considerations, but particularly the latter, at length convinced the proud sultan that his arrogance must bend to his policy; and he accordingly dispatched ambassadors to the court of Buda, where, by the mediation of George, prince of Servia, Amurath's father-in-law, peace was concluded for a period of ten years, and ratified by Vladislaus, who swore upon the Evangelists, and by Amurath, whose sincerity was attested by the sacred Koran.

CHAPTER IX.

" You know me well, and herein spend but time
To wind about my love with circumstance;
And out of doubt, you do me now more wrong
In making question of my uttermost,
Than if you had made waste of all I have."

TRANQUILLITY was again restored to Epirus; but her prince could not participate in that peace which he had given to his country. Unoccupied by the toils of war, or by precautions for the safety of his kingdom, all his former tenderness revived. That love which was his companion amidst the battle's fiercest rage, and stimulated him to unparalleled acts of bravery, in his moments of retirement from

from public business reigned absolute master of his soul, and subjected the prince on whom the collected power of the race of Othman was gaged in vain to its uncontrolled dominion.

The design which he entertained before the invasion of Epirus by Haly now recurred to him, and he resolved to avail himself of the tranquil state of his kingdom to put it into execution. For this purpose he informed Hamesa and Moneses, to whom he resorted for advice, that he was about to make a tour through the maritime parts of his dominions, and inspect the fortifications along the coast, recommending the care of the kingdom to them in his absence, and directing them to apprise him of any events of moment which might transpire; by addressing letters for him to the governor of Durazzo, which he informed them he should make his principal residence.

dence during his absence from the capital.

The evening previous to the day which Castriot had fixed for his departure, while he was making preparations for his journey, he was informed by an attendant that a countryman demanded a private audience, on which he commanded him to be admitted, when an Albanian peasant appeared, and looking round to assure himself of their privacy, he threw off the slouched hat which concealed his features, and exclaimed—"Is Alexis forgotten by Iskander, or rather by the king of Epirus?"

The prince gazed for a moment on the well-known lineaments, and rushed into the arms which were extended to embrace him, crying—"Can Alexis entertain such an opinion of his friend? Never shall I forget the brother of my soul! But by what unlooked-for event

art

art thou here in safety—thou whom I long since mourned as sacrificed by the vengeance of Amurath for thy love to thy friend?"

" My tale is short," replied Alexis. " After that fatal day when your timely interposition rescued me from the cimeters of my foes, our friendship was publicly known. You well know, when you left Anatolia with Hamanzah, duty prevented me from following you. The offence you had given to the proud Iaxis was not forgotten by him; he had found means to misrepresent your actions to the sultan, and further mischief was plotted against you. In the mean while, he devised means to ensnare me, whom he hated for my friendship to you; but all his attempts failed, until the intelligence of your escape after the battle of Mount Haemus, and your subsequent assertion of the independence of your kingdom, arrived at Prusa, when the revengeful pacha arrested me as a secret

I 6 accomplice

accomplice in the scheme, and threw me into a dungeon until the pleasure of Amurath should be known. Well knowing I had little to hope from the justice of that enraged monarch, by corrupting my guards I escaped to Constantinople. My heart beat with joy on entering my native city; but I found that ill-fated empire hastening fast to ruin. My only surviving brother and my aged father were slain by a turbulent faction while defending the person of the emperor from the attacks of the rebellious mob, and that weak sovereign was unable to afford me any protection or countenance. I soon found that my native city was no home for me: my thoughts turned to you, of whose brilliant success fathe made such astonishing report; and after encountering various fortune, and surmounting innumerable obstacles, I at length have arrived and found my friend a sovereign, adored by his people, and happy as his estimable qualities deserve."

" Let

"Let my joy at seeing you," said the prince, "speak your welcome. Make Epirus your home, my friend," continued he, "and deprived as we are of our natural consorts, let us be more than brothers to each other."

"You are now a sovereign," replied Alexis: "the friendship commenced in humbler life may not be proper to be continued between the titled potentate of Epirus and the exiled Alexis."

"Perish such distinctions!" warmly answered the prince—"true friendship, discards them; and here, before yon holy symbol, which you always reverenced, and which I have been lately brought happily to acknowledge, let us vow that, the friendship which began in youth, shall only cease with the latest moments of our existence."

The vow was mutually pronounced, and rising from the kneeling posture in which it had been made, the prince said to Alexis—"You must need refreshment

freshment and repose, which I shall leave you to enjoy ; and remember, in my palace you are under your own roof."

So saying, Castriot left the apartment, and having ordered his attendants to administer to the wants of his guest, he retired to his chamber, rejoiced at the arrival of his friend and companion.

The warm friendship which existed between Castriot and Alexis had commenced with the following event. When Castriot had left the peaceful abode of the venerable Alhammad, and had engaged in the active exploits of war, he one day saw three Turkish spahis furiously assaulting a youth, who, with his back placed against a tree, with determined bravery parried their fierce assaults. He hastily rode up to the spot, and upbraided them with cowardice in maintaining such an unequal contest ; then throwing them a purse of zechiris,

bade

bade them put up their dastardly weapons, and informed the brave young man that he was at liberty to depart.

This Alexis (for he was the gallant youth) declined, saying the whole party to which he had belonged had been slain or taken prisoners, and that it would be impossible for him to regain the city; he therefore preferred surrendering his sword to his deliverer, as from his late noble behaviour he doubted not he should experience such treatment as was due from one soldier to another, whom the chance of war had thrown into his power.

Castriot bade him resume his sword, at the same time assuring him of his protection, and invited him to accompany him to the bashaw Hamanzah, when that general expressed his satisfaction, and warmly applauded the bravest

very of Alexis, and highly commended the generosity of Castriot.

From that period a warm friendship subsisted between Castriot and Alexis, whose similarity of years and nobility of disposition interested that ardent young man in his welfare. The more prudent mind of Alexis was well calculated occasionally to correct the exuberant warmth of Castriot's disposition, while the thoughtful moments of Alexis were enlivened by the gaiety of his friend.

With this attraction in the Turkish army, and from having heard of the dissensions which were carried to a dreadful height between the contending factions in his native city, whence he himself had been driven by the power of party, he chose rather to remain with his friend, and act as a volunteer in the
Turkish

**Turkish service, in the campaign which
was then carrying on against the sultan
of Caramania.**

CHAP.

CHAPTER X.

“ If you knew to whom you shew this honour,
How true a gentleman you send relief,
I know you would be prouder of the work
Than customary bounty can enforce you.”

ON the following morning Castriot informed Alexis of the purposed journey, which he intended to commence that day, when his friend instantly declared his readiness to accompany him.

“ I thank you most heartily,” said the prince. “ The dress you last night wore will be suitable to our purpose. I have procured another similar to it; and that garb

garb will prevent me from being recognized, and permit me to perform my journey unencumbered by the pomp of royalty."

Bidding farewell to Hamesa and Moneses, with the earliest beams of the morning the two travellers pursued their journey, mounted on horses whose drudge-like appearance was in perfect harmony with the coarse garb of their riders.

Through a smiling country, with inhabitants whose cheerful countenances proclaimed their happiness, the prince and Alexis arrived at Durazzo. There, having obtained an audience of the governor, he discovered himself, and informed him that he was on his route to Venice, to which place his departure must be kept a secret, and that he should return from thence in a short period; and commanded him to take charge of

of any dispatches which might arrive from the capital.

The governor received these instructions with respectful obedience; and the prince and his companion having again changed their dresses for those of Venetian merchants, repaired without delay on board a ship which was then completing its lading for Venice.

The third day after their departure from Durazzo, the isles of Venice emerged to the view of the navigators, as it were from the bosom of the ocean. The emporium of the merchandize of Europe appeared to float, as it were, upon the waves of the blue Adriatic. A forest of masts was interspersed with the spires of churches and monasteries, the roofs of mercantile edifices, and the gilded domes of palaces, while the busy sons of commerce, from a hundred different nations, thronged the quays, and the sounds of a hundred

a hundred languages mingled in strange confusion.

On landing they repaired to an inn, situated on one of the principal quays, which the prince intended to make his residence during his stay in Venice.

The feelings of delicacy which Castriot possessed had prevented him from disclosing to his friend the object of his journey; and as he appeared always to avoid any conversation on the subject, Alexis forbore to mention it.

"I must trespass further on your friendship," said Castriot one day to his companion, "as I cannot yet inform you what has brought me hither. I go now to seek to accomplish the purpose of my journey."

"I entreat," Alexis replied, "that you will use my services as you deem best; when my time is unoccupied by you,

gossamer-winged peris with whom the fictions of the East have peopled the regions of the air.

The duchess was surprised at the graceful figure which stood before her as a merchant; and as he evinced evident ignorance of the commodities he displayed, she was led to suspect that he was a merchant only in exterior appearance.

The lively Leonora was too much occupied with the display of the gay paraphernalia before her, to notice the confusion which appeared most visible in the faces of the duchess and the pretended merchant, whose eyes having met each other, had caused the blood to rush into their cheeks. Their embarrassment was relieved by the departure of that vivacious lady, whose attention was called to the balcony, which, from an adjoining apartment, commanded a view

view of the crowded Rialto, where a wandering Savoyard had collected a crowd by the strains of his guitar, which he accompanied with a sweet and harmonious voice.

Castriot gladly seized the opportunity to address the duchess.—“ Fair lady, pardon this bold intrusion. Your expressive looks inform me that you suspect I am here in disguise.”

Greatly astonished, Marciana replied —“ Who or what are you, that you thus dare intrude into the recesses of this palace? For what purpose are you here?” continued she. “ Be assured, if you do not instantly depart, I shall alarm the guards, and your insolence shall meet its just reward.”

“ Grant me one moment’s patience, and I shall quit your sight for ever,” answered Castriot, earnestly. “ Love, bright princess, impelled me hither, and love is the only extenuation of my crime I

can plead. I am no merchant, lady, but a warrior, whom the power of female loveliness has subdued. Your cousin Zemyra, the princess of Athens, rose to my view like a beauteous vision; but for a short period only were my eager eyes blest by her beauteous form. The hard decrees of honour at that time prevented the possibility of pleading my suit, but I have now sought Venice in the dear hope of once more beholding the idol of my soul, and of being permitted to pour out my ardent vows of love and constancy at her feet."

Marciana scarcely knew how to act. She was at first prompted to call Leonora, and alarm the attendants; but her curiosity to hear more of this strange adventure prevailed over her fears, and she hesitatingly replied—"Your declaration, signior, astonishes me, and I fear that I shall deserve the reproaches of my cousin by holding further conversation with you: but know, that the hope of seeing

seeing Zemyra at Venice is vain, for she is now at Tivoli."

" My hopes are indeed again blasted," exclaimed the impassioned prince. " But, lady, pray inform your lovely cousin, that the bearer of this crucifix," displaying her gift, which he had always worn since they parted at Mondania, " has visited Venice, with the fond hope of beholding her. Fain would he have followed her to Tivoli; but the straight path of duty will not bend to the intricate wanderings of love, and he is compelled to tear himself hence. The warmest wish of his heart is for her continued happiness; his days are brightened by the prospect of being at some future period enabled to appear before her in his proper character, and of being rewarded by the smiles of that countenance whose image will ever live in his devoted heart."

" Having embarked thus far in your cause, I will not now retreat," replied

Marciana, who was affected by the passionate protestations of the fervent prince. “ I will not fail to deliver your message to my cousin Zemyra on her return: but I must now entreat that you will depart, as our long conference might be noticed by the attendants.”

“ I obey,” said Castriot, “ and am most grateful for the goodness I have experienced. Lady, may your happiness be unbounded!—but should it ever be my fate to know that the frowns of destiny have lowered upon you, or that misfortune has visited your tranquil habitation, the Knight of the Eagle will never forget the courtesy of the duchess Marciana.”

Thus saying he departed with his merchandize, and on his arrival at the inn found that Alexis had gone into the city to view the many objects of admiration which in every street meet the eyes of the curious traveller.

When

When Alexis returned, the prince informed him that he intended to leave Venice, and set out on his return to Epirus on the ensuing day; as he had completed, as far as possible, the business which had induced him to visit the city.

"Even as it pleases you," replied Alexis; "although I confess I am amazed that you are so soon about to return from the city you have been in such haste to arrive at. These eccentric wanderings have all the appearance of a lover's vagaries. But," pursued he, perceiving that Castriot did not appear inclined to dwell upon the subject, "I shall not attempt to divine your thoughts, but trust to time, the revealer of secrets, for the discovery."

The dawning morning beheld the prince and his friend on board a felucca bound for Ragusa, as there was none

ready to sail for Durazzo; and Castriot's heart a little more at ease on the subject of his love, knowing that Zemyra was in health and safety, and that she would be informed of his constancy, allowed his anxiety for the state of his kingdom to return in full force; his impatience could not brook the delay which would be occasioned by waiting for the sailing of another vessel.

Arrived at Ragusa, the travellers continued their route from thence across the rugged mountains which divide the Dalmatian territories from the northern districts of Epirus, and after a toilsome journey arrived at Croia, where they found the whole city in the greatest consternation, the Turkish sultan having in his absence ordered his troops to ravage the country, expecting to encounter little opposition from the Epirots, when deprived of their victorious chief.

Hamesa

Hamaea and Moneses had assembled all the force they could command, and marched to oppose the enemy.

The eager prince, on learning this unexpected intelligence, although the night was far advanced when they had arrived at Croia, fatigued with his long journey, without tarrying longer than was necessary to resume his proper habiliments, and gird his trusty sabre to his side, he mounted his fiery charger, which he had brought with him from Asia, and, accompanied by Alexis, who would not leave his friend, he immediately set out to join the army.

"Does it not surprise you," said Castriot to Alexis, "that although my departure was unknown to any but to Moneses, the governor of Durazzo, and my cousin, the Turkish sultan should have gained intelligence of it?"

"It wears a suspicious appearance,"
K 4 replied

replied Alexis. "The sudden appearance of the enemy on the frontier must be evidently the effect of treachery."

"I will take instant measures to discover the traitors," exclaimed the prince, hastily: "my vengeance shall fall upon them when they are least prepared to meet it."

"This precipitation, my prince," said Alexis, "would defeat your purpose. You have as yet no proofs; and although the circumstances are strong, yet there is still a possibility that no treason does exist. Your troops have taken the field against the invaders, and hitherto you have had no cause to doubt the fidelity of their leaders."

"Most true, I never have," replied Castriot; "and Heaven forbid I should! Hamesa has been to me a devoted and kind kinsman, and Moneses a great benefactor, whose kindness I can never repay; but his gloomy forbidding manners give him the appearance of being continually

nually discontented ; and instead of beholding in him, as I would fain do, a person to whom I could, as to my father's friend, unbosom myself freely, he always appears to me still the selfish revengeful robber of Mount Haemus, wrapt up in himself, and insulated from society."

The gloomy picture portrayed by Castriot of his general was not overcharged by the rancorous feelings of an enemy ; far from this, he regretted that he found it impossible to view Moneses in a more amiable light. While busied in the glorious work of bringing his prince from Turkish slavery, and enveloped in the thunder-clouds of war, in emancipating his native land from the galling chains of tyranny, the sombre shades of his character were scarcely visible ; and as the din of battle was his greatest delight, he was there regarded as a brave intrepid general, solely de-

voted to the interests of his country. But in the mild sunshine of peace the gloom of his soul became visible : though the gratitude of Castriot had raised him to one of the most elevated posts of the kingdom, by creating him duke of Albania, and by conferring upon him the government of that extensive province, yet his selfish soul was not satisfied, nor did he deem his services adequately rewarded.

But the true cause of his discontent was, that the unparalleled bravery of the prince so far eclipsed his own valour, that he was completely thrown into the shade by it. In this he was also disappointed—the grand scheme, which during a long period of years had been the object of his thoughts, was rendered totally abortive. He had hoped that Castriot, being bred under the care of a learned dotard, as he secretly termed Albanamah, and accustomed to Turkish luxury,

luxury, would be an instrument just suited to his purpose, around whose standard, as a prince of their ancient royal line, the Epirots would rally and shake off the Turkish yoke, and who, when he had seated him on the throne, would be implicitly obedient to his will, and be merely the nominal sovereign, while the power and functions of royalty should be vested in his own hands.

The firmness displayed by Castriot in refusing to accede to the death of Karrem-bey's effendi was the first time that Moneses had reason to fear, from that decision of character which he then evinced, that he should not find him so conforming and pliable as he had hoped: but when he beheld him on the throne of his fathers, wielding the sceptre at his early age with the prudence and judgment of an experienced monarch, and providing for the security and happiness of his kingdom with the care and atten-

tion of a father over his household, the airy fabric of his high-raised hopes dissolved in vapour, and he had scarcely any expectation left of finding in the prince, who bore the sudden elevation from the dependence of a subject to the dominion of a sovereign with such equanimity, a single failing on which to build his hopes of future success.

Inly enraged at these formidable barriers which opposed the eagle flights of his ambitious soul, he had now no other resource but that the ardent heart of the prince, whose enthusiasm was great on all occasions, would be subdued by female loveliness, and becoming a slave to the power of beauty, would forget the public duties of his station.

His own experience, as well as the records of past ages, furnished him with innumerable instances of the power which woman had exercised over the greatest

greatest and wisest of mankind. The wisdom of Solomon, the glory of Alexander, and the ambition of Antony, were subjected to the dominion of beauty: and should a boy display more firmness than them? The supposition was without the least foundation.

Having formed these conclusions, he determined narrowly to observe the conduct of the prince, to ascertain whether he gave a preference to any of the young females who attended the court on state occasions; but in this he was also disappointed, as the attention of Castriot, though courteous to all, was particularly so to none, and Moneses almost despaired of ever detecting him in the weakness of love, when he received information from the governor of Durazzo, who was a creature in his interest, and had been directed by that nobleman to inform him of Castriot's proceedings, that the prince had

had assumed the disguise of a merchant, and embarked in a ship bound for Venice.

Moneses, on receiving this intelligence, was at a loss to divine the motive which could induce the prince to take this extraordinary step. He was well convinced that Castriot had never concealed from him any business connected with the affairs of the state, and after revolving every possible conjecture, he at last concluded that love alone could be the cause of this strange voyage. He also recollects that for some time previous to his departure, Castriot had evinced repeated instances of absence of mind, and had appeared more agitated and reserved than usual.

The arrival of Alexis he believed to be in consequence of a preconcerted arrangement, and gave no credit to the report

report which was abroad, that his coming was altogether unexpected by the prince.

The cordiality with which Castriot had received this new friend was a fresh source of vexation to the perturbed spirit of Moneses, who in him saw a new obstacle to his acquiring that ascendancy over his sovereign which his ambition aspired to.

He now determined to apprise Mustapha, the Turkish general in Macedonia, of the absence of Castriot, and by this information induce that bashaw to invade Epirus with the troops under his command. These he knew were not numerous, and he was well assured Mustapha would not hesitate to march an army into Epirus when he was certain of the absence of Castriot, whose valour and conduct the Turks dreaded more

more than the force of the whole kingdom without his presence.

Thus the Turkish invaders might be made an easy conquest to the army of Epirots commanded by himself, and he was determined to collect such a force as would almost ensure success.

By this stratagem Moneses hoped to gain popularity, as the secret absence of Castriot would be then publicly known throughout the kingdom; and the negligence of that prince, in leaving his country in the hour of danger, while her frontiers were exposed to the incursions of a vigilant enemy, contrasted with his own bravery and watchfulness, would be beheld with displeasure, and all the glory thus shorn from the name of the prince of Epirus would shine with new lustre upon the aspiring brows of the duke of Albania.

He

He accordingly dispatched a messenger in whose fidelity he could confide with letters to the governor of Macedonia, which, though without a signature, conveyed such grateful intelligence to Mustapha, that he gave immediate credence to their contents, and in pursuance of the advice contained in these dispatches, he hastily set the troops in motion, and marched with expedition to the borders of Haemathia.

The intelligence of this invasion was conveyed to Croia, to the real surprise of Hamesa, who well knew the Turkish general would not hazard an encounter with so small a force, had he not discovered the absence of Castriot, and to the pretended astonishment of Moneses, who secretly gloried in the success of his stratagem.

They concurred in collecting the troops with diligence and promptitude, and

and by forced marches reached the plains of Ochrida, and encamped on the southern bank of the Drino, while the army of Mustapha appeared on the opposite bank of the river.

Both armies were immersed in silence and gloom, when Castric and Alexis approached at midnight the camp of the Epirots. The moon was obscured by the sombre clouds of a heavy shower; the watchfires blazed faintly, and were scarcely sustained amid the torrents of rain which descended.

Moneses, in his tent, awaited the coming morning in sleepless and anxious expectation, when the stillness that reigned around was broken by loud shouts arising from every quarter of the camp.

At first he thought the Turks had forced the entrenchments; but he was soon

soon convinced that the noise he heard was not the din and confusion of contending armies, but the acclamations of joy.

Eagerly he rushed to the entrance of the tent to inquire the cause of the strange uproar that he heard, where the first object that met his view was the prince, exchanging salutations with Hamesa, who had hastened to the outposts when the first shouts of the sentinels had proclaimed the arrival of their beloved prince.

Moneses was so taken by surprise at the sudden appearance of him whom he thought traversing the Adriatic, or exploring the plains of Italy, that his accustomed gloom of countenance became deepened into the blackness of despair and detected guilt, and to the gracious salute of the prince he could scarcely return a courteous answer.

This

This was not unmarked by the prince, whose suspicions, once aroused, were not easily allayed; and a glance told Alexis more than words could have uttered.

Recovering himself from the agitation which the unexpected appearance of Castriot had occasioned, Moneses welcomed him to the camp, adding, that he hoped the dispositions that had been made would meet his approbation.

"Yes, prince," added Hamesa; "our crafty foe had gained intelligence of your absence, or I am well convinced he would not have appeared on our confines; but you perceive that he would not have found us unprepared for, or unwilling to meet him."

"You have my best thanks," replied the prince, "for the promptitude and efficiency of the measures you have adopted. But when do you propose to engage the enemy?"

"To-

"To-morrow's dawn will behold the foe in the field," said Hamesa. "He has already thrown a bridge over the Drino, and guarded it by a body of janizaries."

"And shall we tamely wait," exclaimed Castriot, "till the Mussulman beard us in our entrenchments? Soldiers of Epirus, will ye bear this? Though I have this day traversed many a weary league, yon hostile camp dispels languor and weariness. Countrymen, you will follow your prince? Let us on—this night, this instant!"

The unanimous acclamations of the whole army expressed their hearty concurrence in this bold proposal, while the faces of the troops, inspirited by the presence of their conquering chief, glowed with the confident anticipation of victory.

This

This arrangement was so rapidly concluded, that Moneses had no opportunity to offer any objection to it, or to throw any obstacle in the way of its execution, as he would willingly have gained time to apprise Mustaphia of the unexpected arrival of Castriot; and the strength of the army, knowing that this information would be sufficient to make him retreat with precipitation into his own province, and thus prevent the prince from adding another trophy to his victorious name, already blazing with too great lustre for the invidious eye of Moneses.

Short preparation was necessary for men whose hearts were on fire to begin their glorious work. Rapidly proceeded the Epirots to the bridge constructed by Mustaphia for the transportation of his army, to seize the prey he fondly believed could not now elude his eager grasp;

grasp; but it was now destined to transport the Epirots to the work of vengeance.

The foremost of the janizaries by whom the bridge was guarded were quickly prostrated by the sabres of Castriot and Alexis, who rode side by side at the head of the Dibrian cavalry; and the remainder, flying to the camp, alarmed the main body, who were buried in sleep.

Mustapha, roused from repose, ordered the alarm drums to be sounded, and the troops to arm with all possible expedition. He thought that the Epirots, impelled by despair, had made this sudden attack, in the hope of gaining an advantage in the gloom of night, which they could not dare to fling themselves with obtaining in the face of day, and still promised himself a certain victory over so weak an enemy.

But

But these thoughts were soon fatally dispelled by the approach of the Epirots, who, led on by their beloved chief, like an overflowing stream bore down all opposition.

At first the Turks, who supposed that the dreaded arm of Castriot no longer directed the fury of the battle upon them, made a determined and desperate stand against the assailants; but the moon, which had been hitherto obscured, now emerged from the murky clouds, and rode gloriously radiant through the star-bespangled fields of ether.

Then the affrighted Mahometans beheld the heron plumes which waved over the burnished helmet of the dreaded Epirot chief—then saw the diamond erucifix, the fondly-cherished gift of Zemyra, which sparkled upon his breast-plate, and which they superstitiously imagined some talisman brought by the genii

genii of the earth from the caverns of Istakhar, to render this terrible warrior invincible and irresistible.

The appearance of the dreadful angel Azrael could scarcely have inspired more terror throughout the Turkish cohorts than that of Castriot, who, like the lightning's flash, burst so unexpectedly upon their terrified view. With eagle speed he rushed upon the affrighted enemy, who no longer thought of resistance, but sought their safety in precipitate flight.

Mustapha also no sooner perceived that the prince of Epirus headed the enemy, than he abandoned all hope of opposition, as he knew his troops would fly at the first intimation of the presence of Castriot; he therefore mounted his horse and escaped from the field, leaving his camp for a spoil to the victorious Epirots, whom the morning beheld return-

ing triumphantly towards Croia, laden with the booty of their vanquished enemies.

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A ROMANCE.

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ISKANDER;

or,

THE HERO OF EPIRUS.

A Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY ARTHUR SPENSER.

" When heroes trod each classic field
Where coward feet now faintly falter;
When ev'ry arm was freedom's shield,
And every heart was freedom's altar."

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ISKANDER.

CHAPTER I.

— Ill befall

Such meddling priests, who kindle up confusion,
And vex the quiet world with their vain scruples !
By Heaven, 'tis done in perfect spite to peace !

THE discomfited bashaw returned to Adrianople, the sorrowful bearer of the tidings of his own defeat. He found the sultan in the harem, where, having prostrated himself before the throne, he was thus questioned by the angry Amurath :—

VOL. II.

B

“ What

"What brings thee from thy government? Is it thus thou guardest the frontier of my dominions?"

"Sovereign of nations!" replied Mustapha, "in endeavouring to execute thy commands in chastising thy rebellious slave Iskander, the armies of the faithful have been again defeated, and all my attempts foiled."

"Base traitors!" exclaimed the infuriated monarch, "you are in league with the viper whom I cherished in the warmth of my bosom, and who now repays my benevolence by stinging my peace! But I will no more trust to your fair protestations: aged as I am, I will myself lead my troops to crush the reptile, and try which will predominate, the power of Amurath, or the fortune of Iskander."

"Most powerful sultan!" answered Mustapha, "the prodigies of valour performed by the prowess of the rebel-slave I could never have credited, did not dreadful

dreadful experience bear home the conviction. His brandished cimeter prostrated your soldiers, as the deadly si-noom destroys all that inhale its pestiferous breath; and they fled as the affrighted flocks are scattered by the wolves of Caucasus."

"Thinkest thou that his praises are pleasing to my ears?" cried the sultan, his countenance glowing with vengeful anger.

"Far be the thought from the slave of thy will!" replied Mustapha; "but to convince my lord have I dared to speak. Nothing but the sword of Mahomet, wielded by the powerful hand of my sultan, and the armies of Ottoman, led on by the light of nations, could be successful in exterminating this apostate Giaour."

The rage of Amurath was dispelled by this adulatory speech, and he replied—
"It shall be as thou sayest. Let a new army be immediately raised, that no

time may be lost ere my vengeance be glutted with the blood of that traitor."

The behests of the sultan were put into immediate execution, and another army was rapidly forming, when his purposed vengeance against Epirus was delayed by news arriving from the pacha of Bulgaria : the king of Hungary and a large confederate force were preparing to take the field, and to turn their arms agains this dominions.

The rage of Amurath at this intelligence was little short of madness. He cursed his own ill fortune a thousand times, and committted a thousand extravagancies. At length, having exhausted the fiercest ebullitions of anger, he became more calm; and on reflecting on the cares and difficulties of empire, he made a solemn vow, by the head of the prophet, that if his arms were crowned with success in the approaching contest, he would

would resign the diadem to his son Mahomet, and retiring from the world, devote the remainder of his life to secluded devotion.

The peace concluded between Vladislaus and Amurath was greatly to the displeasure of the neighbouring monarchs, especially to Palæologus, the Greek emperor, who had hoped, that if the Hungarians had prosecuted their successes after the battle of Mount Hæmus, they might have driven the Turks out of Europe, and thus have delivered his declining empire from its greatest enemy. He therefore dispatched letters to Vladislaus, upbraiding him with his dereliction from the cause of Christendom, and urging him to break the shameful league, which being concluded without the concurrence of the other Christian powers, could not be considered in anywise binding. He also informed him of the check

B 3

Amurath

Amurath had lately received from the prince of Epirus, and especially of the defeat of Mustapha; and concluded by beseeching him and Huniades, who were the bulwarks of Christendom against the grasping power of the Mahometan sultan, not to leave him exposed to the designs of Amurath, who would turn them against Constantinople, when he was no longer in dread of the armies of Vladislaus.

These dispatches from the Greek emperor were received by Vladislaus in council with the states of the realm, Huniades, and the cardinal-legate, Julian of St. Angelo. This ambitious prelate regarded with the most envenomed rancour all who did not come within the pale of his own faith, and had always regretted the treaty concluded with the Turkish sultan; he therefore seized with eagerness this opportunity, when

when the minds of the king and of the members of the diet were affected by these monstrances of Palæologus, and urged the king to break the impious league, saying it was a scandal and a disgrace to the Christian commonwealth ever to have engaged in it, as well as an act of virtual treachery to the Christian potentates, and, above all, a contempt of the goodness of Heaven, who had mercifully placed the necks of their enemies under their feet, and they, instead of exterminating the infidel race, had joined with them in the bonds of amity and friendship, thus wilfully and presumptuously casting from themselves the bounties which the hand of Providence had placed within their grasp.

These arguments had a strong effect upon the minds of chieftains, over whom superstitious terror and dread of the censures of the church held unlimited sway, and they almost unanimously expressed

their sentiments for commencing immediate hostilities.

Huniades heard with indignation the sophistry of Julian, and no longer restraining his abhorrence of such sentiments, exclaimed—"My liege, and noble lords, will you thus violate engagements ratified on both sides in the most solemn manner? Were we not present at that ratification, and witnesses of the solemnity of the contract?"

He was here interrupted by the cardinal, who cried—"I here abjure the accursed treaty, and call upon you all to follow my example."

Vladislaus, agitated by contending thoughts, knew not how to decide, and sat immersed in thought; while Huniades, perceiving the assembly to be completely influenced by the persuasions of the cardinal, thus addressed that vacillating priest—"Lord cardinal, your zeal for the interests of religion

religion overcomes your better judgment. The cause is feebly supported when she is obliged to call in perfidy as an ally. The precepts of Christianity and the dictates of Islamism alike declare the sanctity of an oath, and Christians and Mahometans are alike bound to revere."

"Are the ministers of the church to be thus insulted?" cried the enraged cardinal, looking towards the king. "But this is not a time for private quarrels. I stand here," pursued he, elevating a crucifix, "as the vicar of our holy father the pope, and again demand that you, my liege, with your nobles, abjure the impious league: the thunders of the church will not sleep against those who refuse obedience to my injunctions."

Vladislaus, thus pressed, gave a reluctant assent, and the cardinal-legate, in the name of the pope, absolved the king;

and the nobility from the obligation of their oaths.

The king having departed, the diet was dissolved, and as Huniades was leaving the hall, the haughty legate tauntingly said—"The valiant Huniades was not accustomed to be thus reluctant to meet the foe. Are the armies of Amarah more formidable to the proud vauwode of Walachia, than they were to the unassuming soldier Huniades?"

"His deeds will best answer for the vauwode of Walachia," returned Huniades. "If this unjust war must be undertaken, Huniades will not be found in the hindmost ranks of his country's cohorts."

Huniades, disgusted with the perfidious conduct of the cardinal, and Julian enraged at the opposition he had met from that general, departed from the council

council in mutual dislike, the haughty legate having viewed Huniades with invidious malice, from the moment his bravery and success had first caused him to be noticed by the king, and he now beheld him with still more envious eyes as the powerful vauwode of Walachia, the favourite of his prince, and the idol of the people.

Vladislaus, although he had suffered himself to be prevailed upon by the arguments of Julian, rather than draw down the thunder of the Vatican, secretly expressed to Huniades his aversion to the war, for which he made preparations with the most visible reluctance.

The cardinal having gained the point he so much had wished for, dispatched letters to the neighbouring states, and urged them to assemble all the forces they could muster, to prosecute the work he had so triumphantly begun, and in the

mean while employed all his energies in forwarding the warlike preparations in Hungary and Poland.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

And banish'd I am, if but from thee.

Go! speak not to me—even now begone!—

Oh! go not yet!—Even thus two friends condemn'd
Embrace and kiss, and take ten thousand leaves,
Loth'ar a hundred times to part than die.

WHEN Zemyra beheld the receding shores of Mondania, and when from the deck she could no longer discern the form of Castriot on the beach, she felt that her youthful deliverer was dearer to her heart than she had ever before supposed, and however she might wish to consider the new feelings which possessed her soul as the offspring of gratitude, love had taken firm possession of her breast, and

and the image of Castriot reigned unrivalled there.

Zemyra had, by a great effort, parted from Castriot with some degree of tranquillity, and she endeavoured to appear as little affected as possible. Her spirits also were somewhat supported by the consciousness of being in safety from many dangers which had before threatened her, and by the hope of shortly being under the protection of her only surviving relatives. But when the shades of night obscured the world, and the coast of Asia was no longer visible, she felt that gratitude was indeed too weak a name to describe the feelings that occupied her breast. All the kindness of Castriot towards her, all the excellency of his character, now rose to her mind's eye; and believing that they were for ever separated from each other, she cherished the remembrance of his graceful form, and of the noble qualities of his soul,

soul, with the same melancholy fondness as is felt when the grave tears from us a dear and esteemed friend.

"I may love him," said Zemyra, mentally, "since I shall never see him more; for I too certainly feel that I can never banish his remembrance from my bosom. And were it possible, why should I cease to esteem and admire him? Is he not worthy of woman's fondest love?"

Her heart told her he was worthy. She vowed to cherish his remembrance, and to love him eternally.

A moment after this vow was formed, Zemyra blushed that she had made it; but the love that dictated it remained as powerful as ever.

The vessel, with a prosperous gale, glided on amidst the isle-studded Ægean. Here the melancholy thoughts which had

had filled Zemyra's breast were dissipated by the constant succession of new objects meeting her eye. She surveyed, with a feeling of mournful delight, the islands which had claimed a patriot connexion with her native Athens; and when she beheld, on some beetling promontory, the ruins of an ancient temple, or the remains of some massy fort, built when Greece was in her meridian glory, when the fame of her arts and arms was spread over the world, and when the prowess and patriotism of her heroes, and the wisdom of her sages, raised her far above all the nations of antiquity, she sighed to think how her country was fallen from the heights of glory to the abyss of misery and degradation.

Occupied with the thoughts of her juvenile years, when the sunshine of peace and prosperity beamed upon her happy days, when she was the delight of a fond father, her recollection recurred to the mournful

mournful change in her prospects as the vessel passed at a distance the promontory of Sunium, and Athens, groaning under the heaviest yoke Turkish tyranny could impose, rose to her imagination. The fatal day which beheld the last struggles of the city of Minerva—the mangled corses of her father and brothers, seemed again before her view; and, unable to resist the impression these terrific images occasioned, she retired from the deck, and in solitude gave way to the sorrows of her heart.

When the ship had passed the southern extremity of Peloponnesus, and was rapidly wafted along the shores of Messenia and Arcadia, Zemyra again ascended the deck as they approached the coast of Cephalonia. She beheld with awful delight the huge elevation of mount Ænos, rising precipitately from the base to its summit, and broken by innumerable ravines. These displaying the white stratum

tum of the mountain, formed a strong contrast to the dark foliage of the pines which clothed its sides and waved upon its lofty eminences.

From the contemplation of this stupendous object, the attention of Zemyna was called to the appearance of the heavens. The lingering rays of the sun had ceased to illumine the pine-crowned crest of *Aenos*, as the vessel moved slowly beneath its shade, and held on her languid course for Ithaca. Not a zephyr ruffled the surface of the sea, which reflected the surrounding objects like a polished mirror. The air was hot and oppressive; dark clouds hung over the mountains, and enveloped their sombre summits in deeper gloom. Suddenly the lowering sky became illuminated by vivid flashes of lightning, and the whole hemisphere appeared one vast sheet of flame; the next moment pitchy darkness prevailed. Again the massy clouds, heaped upon each

each other, displayed mountains of fire, and seemed volcanoes in the air.

The alarm which this terribly sublime phenomenon at first excited in the breast of Zemyra was but little alleviated by the information she received from the mariners, who knew the approach of the sirocco by these indications; so that she beheld with sensations of awful delight these grand and surprising features of nature, while the ship, impelled by the breezes that followed the sirocco, arrived safely in the great port of Ithaea.

Here new beauties met the raptured eye of the enthusiastic young Greek. Although it was now midnight, she still lingered on the deck, whence such varied images of nature's grandeur, united with the remembrances of the years that are past which this classic island suggested, continually presented themselves to her view. She viewed with deep interest

terest the country of the much-enduring Ulysses, whose history had often beguiled the hours of her happier life. The moon now rose over the scene like a powerful enchantress, dispersing the massy clouds, and rolling them before her radiant track. The gulf which the voyagers had now entered spread underneath the waving woods of Neritos, whose steep ascent was shaded by forests of plane and oak. Far as the eye could reach, the gulf was broken by promontories crowned with groves; and as the fierce blast of the sirocco was but transient, the waves flowed gently towards the shore; while the moon, shining in unclouded brilliancy, afforded almost all the distinctness of day, and her mild light threw a mellow lustre over the scene, and imparted to it a silence and repose which soothed the soul to silent rapture.

The fury of this dreaded gale being past, the vessel again put to sea, and arrived

rived in safety at Venice after a quick and propitious voyage.

The unfortunate princess of Athens was received by Pelozzi, the reigning doge, who was her maternal uncle, with the affectionate kindness of a parent. His family consisted of his only daughter, and the marchioness di Camporino, his sister. His wife had fallen a victim to disease several years before the arrival of Zemyra at Venice; and the marchioness, whose husband had died in the prime of life, had since that period been an inmate of the ducal palace. The doge beholding in this beloved daughter the hope of his family, regarded her with an extraordinary degree of affection, and endeavoured to anticipate her slightest wish. This fond indulgence, although in some degree it enervated the soul of the gentle Marciana, yet as she was blest with a most amiable disposition, it did not operate to produce that fretful and froward

foward temper it might have done in a more wayward mind. All the accomplishments a fond father could desire for his beloved child were possessed by Marciana ; and had her mind been properly strengthened, and taught to bear the adventitious misfortunes of life, to which human nature, even in its most elevated situation, is exposed, she would have avoided many miseries into which the extreme sensibility of her disposition plunged her.

This graceful weakness her father, who gloried in feminine delicacy, had always encouraged, and it had never received the least check until her brother's palace became the residence of the marchioness di Camporino. That lady had never experienced the sweet maternal duties and feelings, and being naturally possessed of a strong mind and capacious intellect, she had improved it by studies which are rarely among the catalogue of female accom-

accomplishments. The poets and historians of antiquity she read with delight, and appreciated their classic beauties in their native languages; while of many tongues of the modern Europeans she was complete mistress.

These unusual attainments gave her, in her demeanour and manners to her own sex, an air of superiority, and despising what she considered their frivolous accomplishments, she ridiculed their pursuits and amusements.

The timid and sensitive disposition of Marciana excited the displeasure and called forth the severest reflections of her aunt. At first the austere manners of the marchioness prevented Marciana from receiving her instructions with temper, and she frequently retired from the frowns of her aunt, to weep in silence at a harshness to which she had never been accustomed. But when a longer intercourse

intercourse had in some degree softened the asperity of the marchioness towards her niece, she perceived that Marciana, though full of sensibility, possessed elevated sentiments and attainments, far superior to what she had usually observed in young females whose manners had come within her notice. This induced her to display unusual complacency towards Marciana; and though she would still rebuke her niece's sensibility, which she termed foolish weakness, yet it was with more gentleness; and Marciana soon found enough in the treasures of her aunt's well-stored mind to compensate for the dictatorial asperity of her manners.

The marchioness and Marciana were one lovely evening enjoying the beauties which the clear azure sky added to the scene, in a balcony that overlooked the gardens of the palace, when the doge entered the apartment, leading Zemyra, who

who had just landed from the vessel, which lay near the principal quay.

"Sister," said Palozzi, "I bring a daughter to you; and to you, my dear Marciana, a sister and friend. She claims your kindness and protection by the double ties of kindred and misfortune."

"Surely," said the marchioness, "or I am greatly deceived, it is the daughter of my lamented sister, the ill-starred princess of Athens, the uncertainty of whose fate has caused us so much anxiety?"

"The same," replied the doge. "Her mother seems again before me."

Zemyra, oppressed by her emotions, burst into tears, when she was warmly embraced by her aunt and by Marciana, who affectionately welcomed her, and whose feeling heart sympathized in the emotions of her interesting cousin.

"Cease your sorrows, dear niece," said the doge; "this palace is now your home, and in my sister and myself you shall find new parents."

Unused to such kindness, which recalled her happy youthful years to her imagination, Zemyra could only reply by her tears; and the kind Marciana could not forbear from mingling hers with those of her exiled kinswoman.

Palozzi retired with his sister, and left Zemyra to the care of his daughter, whose gentle heart he well knew would prompt her to soothe the distress of the fair Greek.

When her cousin's grief was somewhat allayed, Marciana addressed her—
"Were it not by events so distressing, I should esteem the circumstances fortunate that induced you to seek a home in Venice, and afforded me a pleasure in
your

your acquaintance, which otherwise I should never probably have known."

"I thank you for your goodness," said Zemyra. "The various emotions which now agitate my breast prevent me from attempting to relate them; but to-morrow I shall be sufficiently calm to detail the particulars of the unfortunate events which have robbed me of my paternal home and dearest relatives."

"I shall wait with impatience," replied Marciana, "for the fulfilment of your promise. Although public report has sketched the outline of your sorrows, as connected with the state, I shall take a deep interest in the immediately narrative of your private griefs."

The marchioness was present when Zemyra recounted the particulars of her severe destiny. At the recital of the heart-breaking events which had marked the later period of her life, the tender Marciana was deeply affected; and

C 2 even

even the philosophical marchioness sympathized in the griefs to which so young, so lovely a female had been thus early exposed.

"Your misfortunes, dear niece," said the marchioness, "claim our commiseration, and at the same time teach us a forcible lesson of the instability of all human happiness, and how, when in the midst of prosperity, we ought to steel our breasts to bear the unsparing fury of adversity's ruthless storms.—How would your sensibility," continued she, addressing Marciana, "have sustained the afflictions your cousin has already experienced! I greatly fear you would have sunk beneath such a fiery ordeal."

Marciana made no reply to the harsh censure of her aunt, but Zemyra was grieved that she should be the innocent cause of uneasiness to her cousin.

Marciana

Marciana and the fair Greek were henceforward inseparable companions ; and after a short period, when the agitation of Zemyra's spirits was subsided, and she began to consider Venice as her home, she became cheerful and calm, and their days glided on in happiness ; except a sigh which sometimes stole from Zemyra's bosom, as the thought of her young and gallant protector was brought forcibly to her recollection, by some circumstance which reminded her of his kindness and virtues.

Marciana would frequently ask her the cause which prompted such deep sighs ; but candid as Zemyra was in communicating every other joy and sorrow of her soul to her cousin, she never divulged the secret of her heart, but suffered Marciana to suppose that the loss of her country and friends was her only cause of regret. That she did love warmly and fondly, she no longer wished to hide

and all kinds of refreshments, enjoyed the lively scene which the quays presented. All distinction appeared levelled; the ancient Saturnalia seemed revived in Venice; and as the revellers were for the most part masked, the respect claimed by exalted rank was no longer regarded—pleasure constituted the business of the day, and the only study was to devise new modes of enjoyment.

One delightful evening, when the radiance of the moon dimmed the lustre of the thousand lights which blazed in every part of the city, tempted by the serenity and calmness of the weather, Marciana proposed to her cousin a short excursion on the water. The marchioness, to whom the gaiety and revelling which prevailed throughout the city was peculiarly irksome, had retired to her study in the interior of the palace, where she shut herself up from the riot so disagreeable to her; and when Marciana requested

requested her to accompany them in their excursion, she refused with asperity, and told her niece that she was astonished at her wishing to participate in such frivolous, if not vicious amusements.

Marciana returned to Zemyra, and reported the ill success of her embassy, when the latter would have refrained from going; but Marciana, who was piqued at her aunt's harsh refusal, would not hear of giving up the excursion; and having ordered the gondola to be brought to the terrace steps, they descended, and, accompanied by Marciana's nurse, took their seats, and soon gained the open expanse of the Adriatic.

When they emerged from the crowd of boats which thronged the canals, and the immediate vicinity of the city, Marciana and Zemyra, who had before been masked, laid aside their vizors, and admired unrestrainedly, and with enthusi-

astic delight, the heart-enlivening scene which surrounded them. The calm un-ruffled sea reflected the radiance of the star-bespangled heavens, and the gay gondolas which rested upon its bosom; the innumerable lights that illuminated the palaces, the colonnades, and the bridges in every part of Venice, gave to the scene an air of enchantment, while the strains of lively music heard on all sides added to the fairy character of the whole.

"Stephano," said Martiana to one of the gondoliers, "let us rest here awhile, and do you perform one of those pretty airs which I have heard you play upon your lute; the effect is much more charming when assisted by the undulation of the waves."

"Ah, my lady," replied Stephano, "you are pleased kindly to compliment my poor performance; but I am almost out of love with myself since I heard

Cosmo

Cosmo play this morning, his touching of the instrument, is so much superior?"

"And who is Cosmo?" said Marciana.

"My companion here, please your highness," answered Stephano; "he is a stranger, just come from Florence, and I am sure will be proud to give your highness a specimen of his skill."

The young duchess having expressed her desire to hear his performance, Cosmo bowed his acquiescence more like a courtier than a gondolier, and having struck a graceful prelude, he accompanied with his voice the plaintive music of the lute.

While the gondolier was singing, Marciana perceived that his eyes were bent upon Zamyla, who, entranced in the contemplation of the magic realities which were spread around her, did not observe the fixed attention of the gondolier.

Cosmo concluded his song, and again bowed to Marciana, who was loud in her commendations of the skill and powers of harmony which he had displayed in the execution; and Zemyra, awaking from her reverie, asked him if the words of the song were his own composition, as from his skill in music, he might be supposed to be also acquainted with poetry?

"They are, lady," replied the gondolier, "the humble efforts of a simple muse."

"Poets of higher pretensions need not blush to acknowledge them," said Marciana.

"They have acquired a value by your estimation of them, which they never before possessed in the eye of the author," returned Cosmo, with another obeisance.

Marciana exchanged a look with Zemyra, expressing their surprise at the graceful

graceful manners of the gondolier, so unusual to that class of society.

On their return to the palace, Marciana communicated to her cousin her suspicions that the gondolier-minstrel was some person of superior rank, in which opinion Zemyra coincided, and they agreed to question Stephano respecting the object of their suspicions.

Stephano being ordered to attend the duchess, she asked why Ricardo was not in the gondola as usual, and who the strange person was that had supplied his place?

"It is as I feared," cried Stephano; "I thought some mischief would be the consequence. If your highness will forgive the small share I had in this business, I will declare the whole truth."

"Proceed, Stephano," said Marciana; "you shall not find me a harsh judge."

"Thank your highness," replied Stephano.

ed to seize a happy moment to address you: it is now mine, and I am thrice fortunate thus to fall at your feet, to declare how much I love you."

"What means this insolence?" cried the astonished Zemyra. "Instantly release me, or I shall call the attendants, and your presumptuous behaviour shall be punished as it deserves!"

"Lady, I fear not your threats—they are perfectly impotent," replied Cosmo. "What you term presumption is the excess of love—love which scorns the restraint of common bounds. I am no gondolier, but this dress suits my purpose. Know, lady, that no lowborn vassal seeks thine affection—I am a prince, a sovereign, and need not fear to ask your hand openly of the doge of Venice. That step political reasons at present prevent; otherwise it would be my glory to woo the princess of Athens in my proper character."

"Be assured, signor," said Zemyra, with

with as much fortitude as she could command, "this violent method will not forward your suit. I insist that you detain me no longer."

"The moments are too precious to be trifled with," exclaimed Cosmo. "Say, then, that you will reflect on what I have said, and promise to meet me here again to-morrow. On these conditions I will immediately retire."

Without deigning a reply, by a sudden effort Zemyra disengaged her hand, and ran, with trembling steps, towards the palace. Before she had proceeded far, her robe was seized by Cosmo, who exclaimed, with impetuosity—"Zemyra, haughty fair! I entreat—I demand a direct answer to the proffer of my boundless, unalterable love."

"Your assertions of your princely rank and your actions but ill accord," replied Zemyra. "Were you possessed of a spark of courtesy, it would teach you

you how unmanly is this conduct, by which I am compelled to hear language at once ill-timed and insulting."

Just at this moment she perceived her cousin at the end of the avenue, and uttered an exclamation of joy, at which Cosmo, who soon saw the cause, exclaimed—"Lady, I am now driven from your presence; but I will not thus lose you—you shall again see me, and again hear my vows of love."

Thus saying, he disappeared among the trees, and left Zemyra astonished at the uncourteous manners of her violent lover, and the imperious terms in which he had declared his affection.

She contrasted this impetuous behaviour and uncontrolled passion with the respectful, un presuming conduct of Iskander, and asked her heart which was true affection? The answer was, not that which,

which, seeking only its own selfish gratification, sacrifices every thing to it, but the love which sees its own happiness in that of the beloved object, and to that subjects every other wish, every other consideration.

Agitation and alarm were depicted in the countenance of Zemayra when she met Marciana, who, not having seen Cosmo, inquired with surprise the cause of her hurried looks, and the visible tremor of her frame?

" Dear cousin," said Zemyra, " how rejoiced am I to encounter you!—you could not have come more opportunely: your appearance in the garden at this moment has released me from the most unpleasant situation."

She then recounted the particulars of the adventure, and Marciana heard with astonishment the lengths to which the strange gondolier had dared to proceed;
" but,"

"but," added she, "I suspected him of paying secret homage to your charms when he attended us on our aquatic excursion, and therefore my surprise at this presumptuous and insolent conduct is not so great."

Zemyra, terrified at Cosmo's threats of seeing and conversing with her again, to avoid the possibility of such an unpleasing rencounter, resolved to go out of the palace as little as possible, and when she did, never to go alone.

She serupulously adhered to this determination, and never walked out of the palace, or embarked in the gondola, except when accompanied by the marchioness, Marciana, or Agatha, her cousin's nurse, who still resided in the palace, and attended the young duchess to mass, or on any of her charitable excursions.

The fair cousins were deterred from acquainting

acquainting the doge or their aunt with their strange adventure, as they well knew that, besides the heavy displeasure of the doge, which Stephano would immediately incur, the apprehension of the disguised gondolier would instantly follow, and that give a publicity to the affair, which they wished to avoid. Added to these reasons, was their fear of the censure of the marchioness, who would severely arraign the imprudence of their conduct in suffering a strange person to attend them in the gondola.

Agatha, the nurse of Marciana, was a cheerful hale old dame, and was greatly pleased with Zemyra's sweetness of disposition, who condescendingly treated her with that respect and kindness which age always demands, but which youth too often refuses, or neglects to pay. Another great recommendation to the favour of Agatha was the attention which

which Zemyra gave to the wonderful legends which she was so fond of relating.

The marchioness and Marciana had gone to pay a visit in a distant part of the city; and Zemyra, as she sat in a cool arbour, inhaling with delight the fragrant breeze, and contemplating the beauties which spread on every side, was listening to one of the innumerable tales of Agatha, detailing the miseries of two unfortunate lovers, when an attendant came to acquaint the dame that she was inquired for by the marchioness, who was just returned.

Agatha followed the page, and Zemyra reluctantly rose to leave the bower. She lingered on the terrace which overlooked the canal, and beheld the sun, which during the day had been obscured by a lowering sky, now burst forth with increased brightness, and tint the purple

purple clouds, that hung over his glories like a gorgeous canopy. In a few minutes his broad disk sunk from her view beneath the horizon; and she was wrapt in a reverie occasioned by the delightful sublimity of the entrapturing scene, when she was recalled from her heavenly contemplations by a sudden noise, and looking around hastily, she saw the dreaded gondolier, who, almost flying up the steps of the terrae, seized her hand before she could elude his grasp, and exclaimed—"How have I longed and watched for this delightful moment, now doubly enhanced by its difficulty of attainment! I would now read in those eyes, bright as they shine with love's own flame, a sentence propitious to my ardent prayers."

"Why am I thus persecuted?" said the agitated Zemyra. "Signor, I again repeat what I thought was totally unnecessary to be repeated—your intrusion is insulting,

insulting; and your protestations of love offensive."

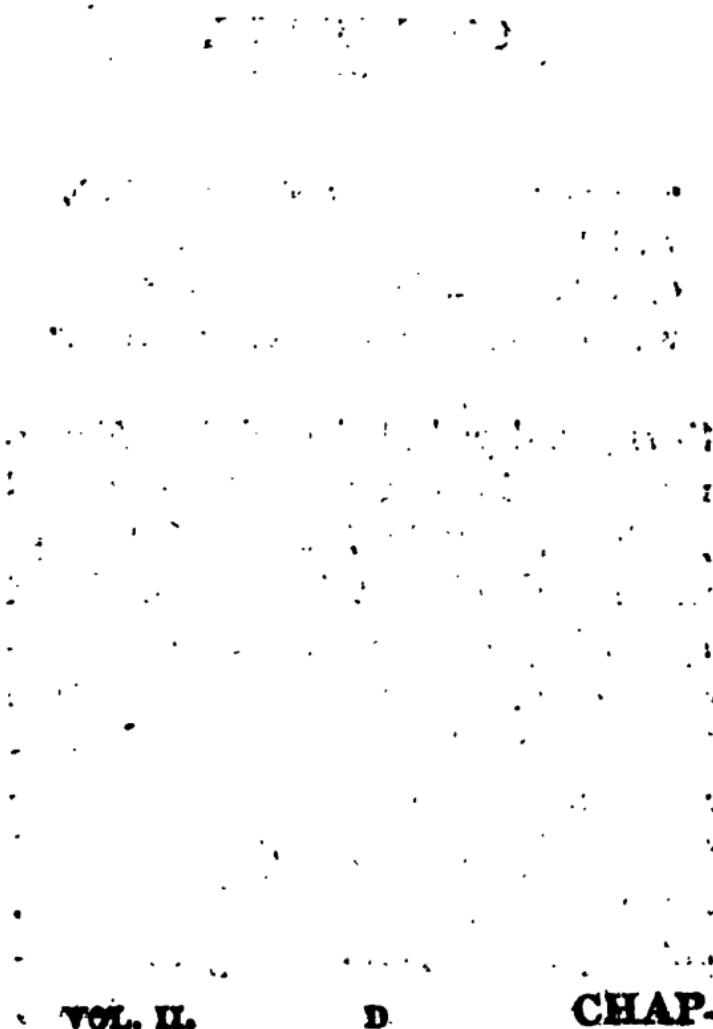
"Am I still to consider this your answer?" said Cosmo, roughly.

"Yes," replied Zemyra; "and since you will compel me to speak, I will no longer hesitate to say, that from being indifferent to me, your daring unmanly conduct has converted the indifference I felt for you, as a stranger, into the most rooted dislike and utter aversion."

"Is it even so?" furiously cried Cosmo, his whole countenance distorted with rage. "I will not, haughty fair! receive this as your answer: you shall have time to reflect—I will make one effort more—you shall again see me; and beware, proud lady, how you again reject my proffered suit!"

Thus saying, he retraced his rapid way across the terrace; and Zemyra, too much occupied with the thoughts of gaining

gaining the palace unmolested, did not attempt to watch his mysterious foot-steps.



VOL. II.

D.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

" What dangerous action, stood it next to death,
Would I not undergo for one calm look !
O, 'tis the curse in love, and still approv'd,
When women cannot love, where they're belov'd."

SEVERAL days had elapsed since Zemyra's second interview with the disguised gondolier, and she had begun to hope that she should not be again molested by his importunities, when she was requested one morning to attend the doge in his closet, where he waited to communicate an affair of the greatest importance to her. The wondering Zemyra could not surmise the cause of this summons, but obeyed, and, on entering the apart-
ment,

ment, she found Palozzi reading a letter, which he immediately presented to her, saying—" My dear Zemyra, I am happy to have intelligence to communicate, which will, I hope, be as pleasing to you as it is to myself. That letter is from Leontio, prince of Parma, one of the most accomplished cavaliers of Italy, who there informs me that your rare perfections and great beauty, which he had an opportunity of witnessing in a menial disguise at our late carnival, have made such an impression on his heart, that by his ambassador, the bearer of this letter, he demands your hand in marriage, and offers such advantageous proposals as leave no room to doubt the sincerity of his love."

Zemyra perused the letter, and in its vehement style she recognized the impetuous protestations of Cosmo; and she was convinced, from what the doge had said, and from the letter itself, that the

prince of Parma and the gondolier were united in one person.

When she had finished this passionate epistle, which was full of the most ardent declarations, she returned it to the doge, who had been watching the expression of her countenance, expecting to draw from thence an interpretation favourable to his wishes.—“ My lord,” said Zemyna, “ I regret that my feelings cannot coincide with your desires in this matter. I reply to the prince by a decided refusal to his offers, which, though splendid, I can never comply with.”

“ A refusal!” repeated the doge. “ What fault have you to find with his proposals?—are they not magnificent, and such as a powerful prince ought to offer?”

“ They are,” replied Zemyna: “ it is not his proposals that I object against; but I do not wish to marry.”

“ These maiden objections you might make,

make, if your lover were present," said Palozzi, impatiently, "but I request a direct answer. Consult with your aunt and cousin; in the mean while, I shall detain the ambassador, to await the acceptance of his master's noble overtures."

Palozzi retired from the closet, and Zemyna sought her own apartment, oppressed with the reflections which this unexpected event occasioned.

The scionry of Venice had long been at enmity with the reigning prince of Parma, respecting the possession of a frontier town, which the prince, in a former treaty, had ceded to Venice, but which subsequently he had refused to give up. This town, therefore, had long been an object of contention between the two powers, and the Venetian troops had been foiled in the repeated attempts they had made to storm it by force, or seize it by surprise.

Affairs were in this posture, when Leontio, disguised as a gondolier, arrived at Venice to partake the amusements of the carnival; and having seen Zemyra, with the young duchess her cousin, at mass, in the cathedral of St. Marco, he inquired of the sacristan who she was, and was informed by him of her near relation to the doge. He was struck with her beauty, and determined to watch every opportunity of seeing her again, and for this purpose he was stationed on the bank of the grand canal when the dispute between Stephano and Ricardo, in which the name of the duchess was repeatedly mentioned, induced him to attend to their conversation; and, delighted at this favourable opportunity, he immediately offered to supply the place of Ricardo, as he hoped the Athenian princess would accompany her cousin in her intended aquatic excursion.

The event proved his conjectures founded

founded on truth ; and this further knowledge of Zemyra increased his love to such a degree, that his naturally fierce and impetuous passions, which had never known restraint, impelled him to the premature declaration of his love to Zemyra in the palace-gardens.

The day after Leontio's second interview with the beauteous Greek, as he was revolving in his mind some new method of again seeing and conversing with the object of his desire, he was informed by a messenger, who had been dispatched from Parma, that his father was lying at the point of death, and having received the extreme unction, he wished most earnestly to behold his son, and to give him his last blessing before he expired.

Filial affection had never been a conspicuous quality in the character of Leontio, and at first he resolved to stay in

Venice and prosecute the affairs of his love; but a spark of duty kindling in his breast, fanned by the breath of ambition, which displayed, behind the gloomy prospect of his father's dying couch, the brilliant glories of the diadem to which he should soon succeed, he obeyed the summons, and arrived at the palace just early enough to receive the last embrace of his dying parent.

When Leontio saw himself securely seated on the throne of Parma, his first act of sovereign power was to dispatch an ambassador to Venice with the letter before referred to, in which he demanded the hand of Zemyna in marriage; and in the event of his proposals being complied with, he offered to conclude peace with the republic, and cede the disputed town, which had so long been the cause of contention between the two states.

The contents of these dispatches, so agreeable

ngreeable to the proud seigniory, were received by the doge in the senate, and by him communicated to the senators, who unanimously declared their opinions that such advantageous offers should not be rejected, but that the conditions ought to be immediately acceded to.

Palozzi, not doubting that Zemyra would gladly embrace a proposal of marriage which would raise her to the dia-dem of a sovereign state, hastened to communicate intelligence which he supposed she would receive with joy; and he was greatly disappointed to find the least hesitation on the part of her from whom he anticipated a ready compliance,

How little was the heart of Zemyra known to him! Born a princess, and educated as one, ambition never held a place in her breast; and though fitted to adorn a court, she sighed not for royalty, and felt that the ducal crown of Parma,

or the diadem of the most powerful sovereign of Europe, would be dearly purchased at the expence of happiness, which could never be her lot, if she were united to a man whom she could not love.

On the following day, the doge entered the apartment where the marchioness and her nieces were conversing on the subject of the proposed alliance. Zemyra could now no longer conceal from the marchioness all she had known of the prince, nor did she wish to do so; she therefore recounted all the particulars to her aunt, who, from the moment she became acquainted with his bold and indeicate conduct, was a decided enemy to the marriage ; and, in her indignation at the uncourteous deportment of Leontio, she forgot to notice the impropriety of which Marciana had been guilty, in allowing the attendance of the strange gondolier, and the laying the foundation of all the mischief that had followed.

Zemyra

Zemyra, encouraged by the marchioness's approval of her conduct, replied with firmness to the doge's question, whether she had now considered the matter, that her determination was unchanged, and, far from being weakened, was the more confirmed by her reflections.

"Zemyra," said the doge, "far be it from me to upbraid you with any favours conferred!—all that I have done for you has been done freely, nor do I now regret it; but the paternal kindness you have experienced from me demands a return similar to that I should expect from Marciana—that you should not treat with levity a proposal in which I am so much interested."

"My kind uncle," exclaimed Zemyra, "your bounteous goodness I can never forget; and there are few tasks, however hard, that I will not gladly undertake,

to prove my readiness and delight to do you service."

"Then permit the addresses of the prince of Parma," replied the doge; "and on acquaintance, you perhaps may feel an affection for him: I do not wish you to promise your hand to Leontio immediately, but to give him the hope that his suit may be ultimately accepted."

"It would be useless to flatter him with vain expectations," returned Zemysra. "I can never be the wife of Leontio; and to delude him with hopes which cannot be realized, is a measure to which I never will be willingly accessory."

"Then," cried Palotzi, "my hope of serving the state, and of making you happy, is for ever blasted. This alliance would, I am persuaded, have done both; but my plans are rendered abortive, sacrificed to the caprice of an inconsiderate girl....Marchioness, I think your philosophical

"Sophical prudence should have instructed your niece in her duty better."

"I cannot instruct her better," replied the marchioness: "I approve Zemayra's sentiments, and her expression of them is such as I should dictate, and you, my lord, ought to applaud. Her reasons for refusing the proposed marriage are not founded on caprice and levity."

She then related to the doge the manner in which Zemayra had been treated by the prince in his disguise; and concluded by saying, that such a man did not deserve to be entrusted with her niece's happiness.

Marciana, who had been a silent auditor, also added her testimony, declaring that the impetuous prince was not worthy of Zemayra.

The doge, satisfied that Zemayra had strong reasons for her dislike to Leontio, felt

felt compunction for the harshness of some expressions he had used towards his niece, into which his disappointment had hurried him. He therefore, taking Zemyra by the hand, tenderly said—“ My dear niece, I know your amenity of disposition will pardon the strong terms in which I have addressed you; but be assured, my regard for your welfare was the cause of my warmth. As the alliance of the prince of Parma is so repugnant to your wishes, I will answer Leontio’s letter by declining the terms proposed, and dismiss his ambassador immediately.”

The grateful Zemyra with tears thanked her kind relatives, and retired to her apartment, rejoicing at the termination of an affair which had been to her the source of great uneasiness of mind.

Palozzi, in his letters to the prince of Parma, softened as much as possible the terms

terms of Zemyra's refusal : but that impetuous prince, on receiving them, and reading in their contents the disappointment of his high-raised hopes, was so greatly enraged, that he broke off the negotiations abruptly, and determined to possess himself of the person of Zemyra by force or stratagem, and compel her to accept the hand which she would not grant to his solicitations. To accomplish this purpose, he employed spies, with directions to inform him of whatever event might transpire with regard to Zemyra.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.

"Hope, of all passions, most befriends us here;
Passions of prouder name befriend us less:
Joy has her tears, and Transport has her death.
Hope, like a cordial, innocent, though strong,
Man's heart at once inspirits and serenes."

SOON after the abrupt conclusion of these negotiations, the marchioness prepared for a journey to Florence, which she had long contemplated. She proposed to Zemyra to accompany her, to which she readily acceded, as her soul was alive to all the charms of nature, and she anticipated great pleasure in passing through that part of Italy which they must traverse in the road to Florence.

The

The marchioness, although she constantly reproved feminine sensibility with acrimony, and Zemyra frequently felt the harshness of her reproof, possessed a heart whose feelings were controlled by the dictates of prudence; and Zemyra, as her aunt's character became more developed to her, perceived, under the forbidding exterior, such knowledge of mankind, acquired by the study of the human character, in books, and in the less fallacious volume of man himself, that she regarded her precepts with deference, and endeavoured to regulate her conduct according to her prudent instructions.

This respectful conduct of Zemyra greatly conciliated the affections of her aunt, among whose foibles vanity held a high rank; and by degrees, in her intercourse with her gentle niece, the asperity of her manners was softened, and became attempered with kindness.

Towards.

Towards the timid Marciana, who shrank from her aunt's severe though salutary admonitions, the marchioness continued to display the same dictatorial haughtiness of mind; and the young duchess, although she shed tears at parting from Zemyra, beheld with pleasure the gondola convey her aunt from the palace.

When Zemyra reviewed her conduct in the affair of the proposed alliance with Leontio, she could not accuse herself of having acted with imprudence or impropriety. She had avoided all interviews with him, and had discouraged his addresses from the beginning. His person and manners were odious to her, and candour demanded the answer she had given. But even had his endowments and accomplishments been sufficiently fascinating to have attracted her regard, his conduct and deportment had been such

such as prudence would loudly have called on her to punish, by a peremptory rejection of his love.

In these decisions of the judgment, her heart had a predominant share; and the character of the fondly-remembered Iskander's love, contrasted with the selfish and brutal passion of Leontio, shone in the glowing colours of the imagination, heightened in their effect by absence. His love had been declared in the most unequivocal manner, by delicate attentions and impassioned looks; and by sacrificing his own desires to the wishes of the beloved object, he had evinced a nobility of spirit, to which the lovely Zemyra found a corresponding feeling in her own breast.

These thoughts passed in the mind of Zemyra when she had retired to her apartment on the first night of their journey, and, with tranquillity in her breast,

breast, she found, on the simple bed which a rustic inn afforded, the refreshing repose which she had often courted in vain under canopies of state in the ducal apartments at Venice.

Hope, the nurse of love, now smiled upon the fair Athenian; and in imagination the day appeared which brought Iskander to her enraptured view, full of the ardent affection she was confident he still possessed.

This bright vision was the companion of her pillow, and when the rays of Thoebus, darting through the lattice, awoke her from those dreams of bliss, the cherub-smile of hope illuminated her beauteous features.

The marchioness and her niece proceeded by easy journeys through the fertile plains of Italy, where every league that they advanced was replete with classical

classical mementoes; and when the eye lost those venerable reliques, which recalled the years of antiquity so forcibly to the memory, the glorious charms of natural beauty left the enraptured mind no pause from admiration and delight. They crossed the Po, augmented by a thousand tributary streams, wandering through the groves of poplar which fringed his banks, and passing through the domains of Ferrara and Bologna, the travellers began to ascend the rugged sides of the Apennines.

With what awfully pleasing sensations did Zenyra sometimes, when the vehicle halted, look down over a perpendicular precipice into a fathomless abyss; in whose dark bosom the roaring of a torrent was indistinctly heard; while above, another frowning rock overhung the narrow road, and seemed ready to fall, and hurl them into the yawning gulf beneath! Anon the road emerged from

higher circles of Florence, her house was visited by the nobility of both sexes, and all whose talents made them welcome visitors; and although frivolity could not be entirely excluded, yet it soon ceased to flutter in such an uncongenial atmosphere as the saloon of di Camporino. The literary attainments of the marchioness were well known in the higher walks of society throughout Italy; but especially in Florence, the Athens of modern Europe, where many of her years had been spent, her high accomplishments were appreciated and admired.

The conversazioni at the Palazzo di Camporino afforded a rich intellectual treat to Zemyra's inquiring mind. Sanctioned by the presence of her aunt, she there heard, with avidity and delight, discussions which to young females in general would have been most irksome, but to Zemyra were possessed of powerful charms. The parties were frequently numerous;

numerous; and as Zemyra was one evening engaged in an interesting conversation with the countess Razovi, she perceived, with astonishment and dismay, the dreaded form of Leontio. With a look of triumphant confidence, he addressed himself to Zemyra, expressing his pleasure at the happiness he felt in thus unexpectedly meeting her. Confused at this unlooked-for encounter, and unwilling that the countess should perceive her embarrassment, Zemyra made a formal reply to the prince, and as soon as she recovered from her first surprise, continued her conversation with the countess, and appeared not to notice the presence of Leontio.

Stung to the quick at this coldness and contempt, the prince hastily retired from the spot, mentally resolving to make one trial more to win the object of his passion openly, and if that failed, to devise some plan of deep revenge.

He had been informed by the spy he had stationed at Venice, that the marchioness and her niece had left that city, and that Florence was the place of their destination. On receiving this intelligence he set out for Florence, as soon as he could complete the necessary arrangements for his departure, and arrived at the house of a young nobleman of that city, under the title of the count of Pandanza : he there found, to his great joy, that his friend occasionally attended the conversazioni of the marchioness di Camporino.

By this means he gained access to the marchioness's palace, and appeared before the astonished Zemyra, when she had not the smallest apprehension of being exposed to his persecutions.

As soon as she perceived him at a distance from her, she alleged a sudden indisposition as the cause of her leaving
the

the saloon, and retired to her chamber to avoid the sight and the attentions of Leontio, who grew more and more obnoxious to her, the more she was acquainted with him.

When, on the succeeding morning, the prince again appeared at the palace, Zemyra refused to see him; and the marchioness, to whom he now announced himself by his proper title, reproved his conduct in severe terms, and told him that the sentiments of Zemyra and of herself were in perfect unison, and that titles and power lost their charm, when allied to an ungoverned and impetuous disposition.

“Madam,” exclaimed Leontio, “I came not hither to listen to strictures on my conduct, nor to be insulted by remarks upon my temper. Love for your niece has prompted the measures I have

had recourse to, and I came hither to demand her in marriage.—I await your decisive answer."

"Then thus hear it from me," replied the marchioness, whose dislike of the prince was now increased by her personal knowledge of him. "I had rather see Zemyra the wife of a man whose riches alone consisted in excellence of heart and nobility of soul, than of thee, whose vices are rendered more conspicuous by the lustre of a diadem. Zemyra of Athens will never be the bride of the prince of Parma."

"Enough!" cried the prince, as soon as his boiling passions would permit him to articulate: "I am justly punished for thus becoming the slave of woman—But it is now past.—Proud marchioness, learn to dread the hatred of Leontle! My love I offer no more; but the haughty fair one who contemned that love shall tremble at my vengeance!"

"Virtue

"Virtue fears not the threats of malice," returned the marchioness, with dignified calmness, "assured that the machinations of the wicked recoil with redoubled force upon their authors."

More and more exasperated at the contempt he experienced, Leontio rushed from the palace, vowing the most ample vengeance upon the marchioness and Zemyra.

The love of the prince of Parma was founded on passion, and not on esteem. For the qualities of the mind which shone so brightly in Zemyra, he cared little—he never had sought to trace them. His pride was wounded by the constant rejection his proposals had met; and his passion, now changed from love to revenge, determined to find a gratification of hatred, if not of love.

CHAPTER VI.

— Since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain —

.....
— Oh, my love ! my wife !
Death that hath suck'd the honey from thy lips
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty :
Thou art not conquered.

THE threats which the infuriated Leontio had uttered were considered by the marchioness as the unmeaning ebullitions of disappointed rage ; but to Zemysra they were the source of dreadful apprehension. It was in vain that her aunt reasoned on the folly and weakness of her fears, and although she assumed an external

external serenity, her bosom was agitated by a thousand dismal forebodings.

Her oppressed mind was relieved by the arrival of a courier from the doge, with letters to the marchioness, and in the packet was a letter from Marciana to her cousin.

In this the young duchess rallied Zemyra on the secrecy she had observed on the subject of her love, and that by a strange accident she had discovered the object of her affection, and in him a stronger reason than any she had assigned for her decided rejection of the prince of Parma. She then related the adventure of the disguised merchant, his protestations of unchanging affection, and his disappointment at not seeing her in Venice, whither he had come from some unknown distance, for the avowed purpose of beholding the object of his dearest hopes.

Zemyra perused the letter repeatedly before she would permit herself to be assured of the reality of the gladdening intelligence it contained : but the circumstances described were too plain and too well known to permit her to doubt the truth; the delightful certainty was obvious, and she welcomed to her breast the full tide of joy which this conviction produced. Iskander was still the same—his love had stood the test of time and of absence, and his worth was no longer an ideal dream of her sanguine imagination. His claims to her regard were now strengthened, and she beheld the same graceful deportment, the same affection attempered with respect, evinced in all his actions in the ducal palace at Venice, as shone so conspicuously during her intercourse with him in Anatolia.

The tormenting thoughts which a few short moments before had racked her bosom no longer found a residence there:
joy,

joy, like a long absent friend, reigned unrivalled, and the fierce threats of Leontio faded into obscurity before the bright vision of Iskander's love and the assurance of his tried constancy.

The letters from Palozzi to his sister contained a request that she would return immediately to Venice, as he had received private advice that Italy would shortly become the theatre of war. He therefore advised her to set out on her journey, before the perturbed state of the country rendered it unsafe to travel.

In compliance with this intimation, the marchioness and Zemyra departed from Florence, and retraced their route through Tuscany. They crossed the Apennines in safety; but before they had entered the Venetian territory, the trump of war was sounded, and they frequently encountered parties of troops proceeding to oppose the forces which

the emperor had marched against the chiefs of the Italian confederacy.

The travellers passed the Po, and the apprehensions which Zemyra had entertained of encountering danger from the straggling parties of soldiers, and from the devices of Leontio, decreased as they approached nearer to the dominions of the seigniory. They pursued their journey as rapidly as possible, without interruption, till a day's journey alone separated them from the Venetian territory. They had entered a thickly-wooded valley, through which the road lay amidst the overarching branches of gigantic trees, whose foliage was so luxuriant that it almost excluded the light of day. The leaves were unruffled by a single breeze, and the solemn stillness was undisturbed except by the melody of the birds, and the murmuring of a stream which flowed through the centre of the valley. Nature was hushed in repose; the hearts of

the

the marchioness and of Zemyra acknowledged the soothing tranquillity of the scene, when, on turning a projecting knoll where the road struck into a still deeper gloom of wood, the delicious meditations of the travellers were put to flight by the sudden appearance of a body of men, of a fierce mien and unusual garb, who, rushing from the recesses of the forest, surrounded the carriage, and seizing the reins of the horses, commanded the postillion to stop, while one, who appeared to be the chief, rudely dragged Zemyra from her seat, and, regardless of her cries, placed her upon a horse behind one of the band.

The resistance which the servants of the marchioness attempted to make was altogether fruitless; they were instantly overpowered by numbers, and when their lady endeavoured, by the offer of her purse, accompanied by the most earnest entreaties, to procure the liberation

of her niece, the chief bluntly told her that they were not robbers, therefore gold was not their object, and having obtained the wished-for prize, they should not lose it easily. Thus saying, leaving part of the band to guard the marchioness, with the rest of his companions the chief bore away the powerless Zemyra, who had fainted with the excess of her apprehensions, and returned with rapidity through the road by which the unfortunate travellers had entered the valley.

Before the ravishers emerged from the glen into the more open country, they struck into the wood by a narrow path, where, at a short distance from the road, another party was stationed with a litter, into which the fierce chief lifted the still unconscious Zemyra.

The motion of the litter now awakened Zemyra to a consciousness of her dreadful situation, and the most terrible
appre-

apprehensions arose in her breast. Torn from her only protector, exposed to the lawless and savage dispositions of men whose dark and scowling countenances bespoke them trained to deeds of darkness, where now was the arm that would interpose between her and imminent destruction?—Love dictated thoughts which reason immediately rejected. Her noble deliverer, far distant, knew not the dangers to which she was exposed, or her heart fondly assured her he would fly to her succour. This reflection, though fruitless in every other respect, afforded her strong consolation; and, like the angel of hope, it revived her spirits, before sinking under the load of misfortune.

Her reflections were interrupted by her fierce conductor roughly telling her that the curtains of the litter must now be closed, as they had entered a more frequented part of the country.

On

On Zemyra's earnestly entreating to be informed of the place of her destination, or why she was thus torn from her aunt, he answered—" You will know that in good time; at present, silence will be your only security and your best protection. Your death," continued he, displaying a stiletto he wore in his girdle, " will follow the least exclamation."

Thus saying, he drew the curtains of the litter, and left Zemyra to the sad meditations which the dread of Leontio, into whose power she felt convinced she was fallen, suggested. They pursued their journey in silence till towards the close of the day, when as they were ascending a toilsome mountain-path, Zemyra perceived, through the curtains of the vehicle, the approach of a man on horseback. Her heart sunk within her from the apprehension that he was Leontio. From this dread she was relieved by one of the band exclaiming—" Ha, Michael !

Michael! whence come you so unexpectedly?"

"From the prince. You must return," replied the horseman

"Peace, ye babbling fools!" cried the rough voice of the chief.

The eager ear of Zemyra could not gather what was said further, as the conversation was continued in a low tone; but she had heard enough to convince her that her suspicions were founded on truth, and that Leontio was resolved to put the threats into execution which he had uttered in the palace of the marchioness at Florence. In the midst of the misery into which this conviction plunged her, she gathered some faint consolation from the assurance that her meeting with the dreaded prince was for some reason deferred, as, in compliance with the order she had heard the horseman give, they were now returning through

through the road they had just passed, with as much rapidity as the roughness of the way would permit.

Night now closed around, and Zemira hoped that her conductors, by stopping at some inn or cottage, might afford her an opportunity of escaping; but even this faint hope left her, when she found that they still proceeded. They continued their journey through the rough track of a forest-path until they arrived at the extremity of the wood, and after travelling over an open inhospitable heath, they perceived what they thought the light of a cottage, appearing in the distance through the trees.

"We have missed the road, signor," cried one of the band. "We are on the wrong side of the mountain. This will never bring us to the place of our destination."

"I begin

"I begin to fear so," replied the conductor, interrupting him; "however, we will proceed towards yonder light, where, perhaps, we shall find some person of whom we can inquire our way."

As they approached nearer this object, the ground became more wooded, and the light that had before guided them disappeared. They now proceeded, as nearly as they could guess, in the same direction through the grove, when, on emerging from among the trees into an open space of ground, they perceived the light they had seen proceeded from a watchfire, and the next moment they were challenged by a sentinel.

Unable to give the countersign required, the leader, cursing the folly which had thus led him into the very danger he had so studiously avoided, attempted to retreat into the wood. The sentinel seeing him hesitate, instantly gave

gave the alarm, and being joined by the guard, the band was immediately surrounded.

The conductor attempted to defend himself, and calling to his comrades to follow his example, drew his sword; but as none of the band obeyed, he was soon disarmed, and the whole party, with their fair prisoner, were conducted before the general by the officer of the guard.

“Alas!” mentally cried Zemyra, “for what new misery am I reserved? rescued perhaps from one danger to fall into a greater!”

Drawing her veil closely over her face, she proceeded, with her fierce companions, to the general’s tent.

“Prisoners, my lord,” said the officer, on entering, “challenged by the sentinel at the outposts.”

“Whence

"Whence come ye?" said the venerable count Armanstadt: "declare your object in approaching the camp."

"Accident, my lord, conducted us hither," replied the chief. "We were journeying from the convent where this young lady has been boarded, on our return to Bologna, and having missed our way in the forest, we unwittingly encountered the sentinel."

Zemyra, shrinking from the gaze of the officers who crowded the general's tent, was too much abashed at first to declare the falsehood of these assertions; and though her thoughts at this adventure, when she beheld the prepossessing countenance of the venerable general, were those of joy and hope of deliverance, yet she almost determined to forego the favourable opportunity of escaping from her persecutors, rather than expose her sorrows in an assembly where not one of her own sex appeared to encourage

rage her, and where her tale might not be credited, were she to relate it.

All these considerations soon vanished before the dreadful assurance which she felt, that if she suffered the present favourable occasion to pass, she must soon inevitably be consigned to the power of Leontio.

Partially drawing aside her veil, she thus addressed the venerable general—
“ My lord, if your breast ever knew compassion, I beseech you to pity the misfortunes of a distressed injured woman! Permit me to assure you that the assertions of that person are entirely false.”

“ Hold!” interrupted the conductor, casting an appalling look at his shrinking captive.

The count waved his hand to command silence.—“ Speak without fear, my child,” said he, mildly : “ you shall not be again interrupted.”

With

With many blushes Zemyra detailed the particulars of her journey from Florence on the way to Venice, in the company of her aunt, the marchioness di Camporino ; and that so far from having boarded in a convent at Bologna, she had never seen that city. She concluded by describing the violent means that had been used by the emissaries of the prince of Parma, and the success which had attended their machinations.

The general, with the caution of age, appeared to hesitate between two such contradictory statements, when the young baron of Eldenfeldt, who stood at his right hand, exclaimed—"Surely, my lord, you will not for a moment doubt which of these you ought to give credit to ? Is not the darkest villainy plainly depicted on the lines of that man's countenance, while on this lady's beauteous face truth appears in the most legible characters?"

Zemyra's

Zeruya's eyes were bent to the ground at the accusation, and the count replied in ~~impatience~~ by saying—“Eldenfeldt, you judge as almost every young man would. I am past the age of prepossession, and must endeavour to decide according to reason.”

Zeruya stood in trembling suspense; she could scarcely support herself under the imminent apprehension of being again left in the hands of Leontio's creatures.

The rough voice of her fierce conductor was again heard asserting the truth of his ~~suspicion~~, and the falsity of that of Zeruya. Every word struck dismay now ~~into~~ her heart. Overcome with emotion at being taxed with falsehood, and with terrible forebodings of her future destiny, she was ready to sink under her ~~oppressions~~ and severe destiny, when the voice of one of the band was heard interposing the leader in his protestations of

of sincerity, by saying, that as they were now prisoners, he cared neither for his employer nor the prince, and he would declare the truth, which was exactly as the lady had stated, while the tale of the leader was a vile fabrication.

The eyes of Zemyra were upturned to heaven in gratitude for thus permitting her testimony to be corroborated, and she stood a few seconds absorbed in mental thankfulness. Her attention was recalled to the scene around by the count's questioning the informer what was the prince of Parma's intention in *seizing* the person of the lady who stood before him?

"As to that, my lord," replied the man, "I don't know what the intention might be, but our orders were to convey her to the prince's villa, *near* Parma. Perhaps the lady can tell him better than

than I; but I have heard that it was because she would not listen to his love."

"Save—oh, save me from his power!" cried Zemyra. "You cannot now doubt the oppression of which I have been the victim."

"No, lady," said the venerable general, "I do not disbelieve your statement; and now my doubts are dispelled, you shall find in me a warm friend and a powerful protector.—See these men be secured," continued he, addressing himself to the officer. "As subjects of the prince of Parma, I shall detain them prisoners of war."

The officer obeyed the command. None now remained in the pavilion but the general, his son-in-law the baron Eidenfeldt, and the fair Athenian.

"Lady," said the baron, as soon as the tent was cleared, "the count and myself

self deem ourselves thrice fortunate in being the means of your deliverance from the emissaries of Leontio, and their uncavalier-like master."

"I cannot find words to thank you, signor," replied the agitated Zemyra, conquering with difficulty the rising tear as she cast her eyes around the tent, as if she would have said—"Even this is not to me a place of safety."

The penetrating glances of the baron read in that inquiring look all that Zemyra would have uttered, and taking her hand he led her to the inner pavilion, where to her great joy she was welcomed by a lovely female, the baroness Eldenfeldt.

The baron explained to his wife the events which had thrown the fair stranger under their protection, and caused her to appear before her at such an hour. With sympathetic tears she commise-

rated the misfortunes of the youthful Greek, as she briefly related the history of her woes from the death of the prince of Athens, her ill-fated parent, and with the kindness of an old friend she bade her cease her sorrows, and indulge in the hope of brighter days.

Under the protection of the venerable count of Armanstadt, and in the society of the amiable baroness Eldenfeldt and her accomplished husband, tranquillity again visited the breast of Zemyra, and she would have deemed herself comparatively happy, had not the recollection of her aunt, and anxiety for her welfare, embittered her reflections.

The seigniory of Venice, in the contest between the emperor and the Italian states, had preserved a strict neutrality; and had alike refused a passage through its territory to the troops of either power. The baron therefore, on discovering that

Zemyra

Zemyra was so closely related to the doge, informed her, when she was one day expressing her apprehensions about the fate of the marchioness, that he would, if she pleased, send a troop of cavalry to escort her to any of the frontier towns, whence she might reach the capital in safety.

Zemyra expressed her gratitude for this mark of kindness and attention to her wishes; but considering that she must pass through a large tract of country, which being very recently occupied by the Austrian forces, was still in a state of turbulence, and dreading to be exposed to any new dangers, she begged the baron's permission to remain still his guest; and that in the mean while she would write and acquaint her relatives of her own safety and welfare.

To this arrangement the baroness gave her warm approval, as the amiable qua-

lities of Zemyra had so won her affections, that to have parted from her would have been the source of the bitterest regret.

The Austrian troops having taken possession of Mantua, the head-quarters of the army were removed thither; and the inhabitants being favourably inclined towards the emperor, rendered it a residence far more agreeable to Zemyra than a camp, as well as to the baroness, whose affection for her husband prompted her to dare the dangers and inconveniences of the field, rather than be separated from the beloved partner of her heart. Her health had also been precarious for some time previous, and for that reason her anxious husband rejoiced that by the removal to Mantua she would enjoy accommodations such as a camp could not afford.

Not many days after this event, the general

general received dispatches from the emperor, commanding him to detach the baron of Eldenfeldt with a large body of veteran troops to join the Austrian forces, which were marching to reinforce the confederate Christian army, under the command of Vladislaus.

Never till this moment had the summons to the field sounded harshly to the ear of Eldenfeldt. The emperor's order was peremptory, and admitted of no delay, so that the march towards Hungary must be commenced immediately ; and knowing the baroness would not hear of a separation from him, he dreaded the effects of the journey in her present debilitated state.

When the intelligence was imparted to her by the baron, not all the tender arguments he could advance, nor all that Zemyra could urge, for a moment were able to shake her determination of accompanying

companying her husband. She said that her fears in the absence of Eldenfeldt would be much more injurious to her health than even the fatigues and inconvenience of the long march she must undertake, and which in his society would be stripped of all its difficulty.

When Zemyra perceived that the resolution of the baroness was unalterable, she resolved to accompany her to Hungary, although by so doing she would be more remote from Venice, and perhaps lose an early opportunity of returning to that city. Yet she gladly embraced that occasion to evince her gratitude for the kindness she had received from her valued friends and protectors.

"I will still claim your protection, my lord," said Zemyra, "and with your permission accompany you to Hungary."

The baron was fully sensible of Zemyra's

re's delicacy, in thus making the journey to Hungary appear as a favour conferred on her, and thankfully accepted the proffered kindness.

The baroness was delighted at this arrangement, as she felt for Zemyra a sisterly affection, and it would have wrung her heart to have parted from her.

The virtues of the lovely baroness El-denkeldt, which became more conspicuous from longer acquaintance, drew forth the warmest admiration from Zemyra. Her love for her husband, which, in the opinion of some, might be deemed an excessive fondness, in the eyes of Zemyra was a most amiable trait of character; and the baroness was no less delighted with the engaging and admirable qualities which every day proved she possessed. Similarity of disposition soon increased the prepossession which at first sight they had felt for each other; and

the baron beheld with pleasure the friendship which existed between his beloved spouse and the amiable Greek.

From the accommodations which the care and tenderness of Eldenfeldt had provided, the baroness proceeded with less inconvenience than had been expected ; and as they traversed the mountainous districts which divide Italy from Germany, she felt great benefit from the purity of the climate, and seemed fast approaching to convalescence.

These pleasing anticipations were soon overcast. The troops had now passed the mountains, and were traversing the tangled forests and marshy plains of Croatia. The baroness soon felt the change, and languished as she breathed the moist air of this foggy climate.

They had now entered the kingdom of Bosnia, and were within two days' journey

journey of Belgrade, the point of rendezvous, when the illness of the baroness was increased to such an alarming degree, that it was impossible for her to proceed. She was then conveyed to the neighbouring convent of St. Alba, where her afflicted husband, after taking a heartrending leave of her, consigned her to the care of Zemyra, saying—
“ Watch over this dear treasure of my soul, for I feel that my fate is so firmly bound in hers, that the loss of my Constantia would leave this world a blank to me. Imperious duty calls me hence; but I leave the dear partner of my heart with more tranquillity than I could have hoped for, since she is in the care of such a friend as Zemyra has proved herself.”

The sympathizing Zemyra repressed a rising tear, the spontaneous tribute to conjugal affection, and replied—“ Be assured, my lord, that all that your fondest wishes could suggest for the comfort

of our afflicted friend shall be performed with the most scrupulous care. I trust the gloom occasioned by this separation will be chased by the smiles of health and joy with which you will shortly meet again."

"Heaven so grant it!" responded the baron, with a deep sigh; and, mounting his steed, he put himself at the head of the troops, and marched with rapidity towards Belgrade.

The hopes with which Zemysra had endeavoured to inspire Eldenfeldt were not prompted by an expectation that they would be realized to the extent she had ventured to predict: in the languor and debility of her friend she saw the causes of protracted illness, and though she hoped an ultimate recovery, she felt conscious that it must take place at a distant period; but even this hope was soon annihilated—the departure of the baron affected the weakened frame of the

the patient to such a degree, that she grew hourly worse: the best assistance that the skill of physicians could afford was quite fruitless—death had marked her for his victim; and the fourth day after the departure of Eldenfeldt, this youthful, amiable, and almost idolized wife of a fond devoted husband, was torn from him by the universal conqueror—She expired in the supporting arms of Zemyra, and her last breath was employed in commanding her widowed husband to the protection of Heaven.

The stimulus that had supported Zemyra during three successive nights of watchfulness was now lost in the pallid form before her; and when the fatal truth that the hapless Constantia had ceased to breathe could no longer be doubted, her senses forsook her, and she sank powerless to the ground.

The physician, who was present, having
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ing prescribed proper restoratives and rest for his lovely patient, left her to the care of the pious sisters of St. Alba, who removed her inanimate form from the chamber of death, and applied the prescriptions of the physician with such success, that she was soon restored to sensation, but was still so greatly debilitated, that she gladly acceded to the request of the abbess to retire to an apartment, and seek the repose her exhausted faculties so much required.

A messenger was dispatched to apprise the baron of the fatal event, which had robbed him of the being that was far dearer to him than his own existence. He had reached Belgrade, and was just about to mount his horse to attend the king of Hungary, at a review of the forces, when the courier arrived, bearing a letter from the abbess of St. Alba, containing the heartrending recital of the death of her in whom was centered all his

his earthly bliss. With eager trepidation he tore open the letter, and there read the confirmation of his worst fears.

Heedless of the pious consolation which the abbess had subjoined, the fatal reality was all he could behold. The stroke fell upon him like a thunderbolt; a deadly paleness overspread his countenance, and the warrior and the man were lost in the excess of the acute feelings that overwhelmed the husband. In another moment he grasped the reins, which had dropped from his nerveless hand, and, without uttering a word, or noticing, in the slightest manner, the monarch and his retinue that stood near him, he put spurs to his fiery steed, and darted through the city gate with the rapidity of an arrow.

The convent of St. Alba was situated at the distance of two days' journey from Belgrade, but the fleet courser of the
distracted

distracted Eldenfeldt, urged by his master to full speed, performed the journey in a much shorter period, and the astonished abbess beheld him at the convent-gate, when she supposed he could not have left the city.

The convent-bell announced that the hour of interment drew nigh, but nothing could prevent the heart-stricken Eldenfeldt from gazing for the last time upon those features it had been his delight to behold when glowing with health and affection. Like a faded lily, the adored partner of his soul lay before him; her features, though fixed by the cold hand of death, still possessed a calm serenity—no lineament of despair distorted her countenance, but it bore evident testimony of her having resigned her soul into the hands of her merciful Creator with a placid confidence, which the terrors of death itself had no power to destroy.

Zemyra

Zemyra forbore to intrude on the sacred sorrows of the widowed baron, until the first ebullitions of his grief had subsided. At her approach, his sorrow burst forth afresh—"Alas!" said he, "is this the happiness you predicted at our next meeting?—Happiness is no more the lot of Eldenfeldt!"

Zemyra could only reply by her tears; and in this congenial sympathy from one who knew and appreciated the worth and amiable virtues of his departed consort, the afflicted Eldenfeldt experienced the first dawning of consolation that had visited his desponding breast, since the moment when he was informed of his irreparable loss.

It was evening; the convent-bell, that warned the inhabitants of the neighbouring district of the departure of a fellow-mortal, was heard heavily tolling far along the thickly-wooded valley of St.

St. Alba. The solemn rite which hid from the view of Eldenfeldt the remains of her who constituted the sum of his bliss, was performed by the venerable abbot of St. Stephen, a monastery not far distant. The sweet voices of the nuns chaunted the melancholy strain of the requiem for the departed soul. Eldenfeldt and Zemyra attended as the principal mourners: how sincere was their grief! they needed not the external paraphernalia of sorrow, “the mockery of woe.” Eldenfeldt was following to a premature grave the dearest object of his hopes, the centre of his joys—her with whom he had fondly expected to tread the road of life in sweet communion—the participator of his pleasures, the sympathetic friend in his grief. These halcyon visions were swept away, while the sad reality of his loss alone remained; and hung upon his heart like the weight of a millstone.

Zemyra,

Zemyra, although her grief was not characterized by so great acuteness, yet she sincerely sympathized in the accumulated woe which pressed so heavily upon the afflicted Eldenfeldt. She also felt severely, when she reflected on her own situation. At a time when Heaven, in pitying kindness, seemed to have given her a friend, a sister in heart though a stranger by blood—one with whom she could, as it were, exchange souls, and in whose society the loss of kindred seemed forgotten—that friend, that sister, was snatched from her by the stroke of death; the link of friendship was severed for ever, and she felt herself forlorn and alone, in a country remote from those to whom, by the ties of kindred, she was entitled to look for protection.

When the grave was closed over all that endeared him to this world, and the solemn service was completed, Eldenfeldt

seldt retired to the extremity of the church, where a crucifix was suspended against the wall. Here, for a while, he knelt in silent prayer, while the big drops of sorrow coursed each other down his manly cheek in quick succession. After a time, the tears ceased to flow; calm resignation was depicted on his countenance, and he ejaculated, as he rose—"Merciful Power! I thank thee that thou hast been pleased to pour the balm of consolation into the wounds of this bleeding heart! and here, before this sacred symbol, I vow to devote my life to thy service, and to continue a soldier of the cross, till called to meet my departed Constantia in those regions where sorrow is never known, and where the blessed inhabitants fear no second separation!"

He returned to the convent, and, presenting a purse of gold to the abbess, he entreated her to indemnify herself for
the

the expences that had been incurred during the illness of his lamented consort.

He then bade adieu to Zemyra; and after advising her to remain at present as a boarder with the abbess, he continued—" I would gladly accompany you to Venice, my much-valued and amiable friend, but I fear my absence from the army has been already protracted too long. You will be in perfect security under the protection of the worthy abbess, until you can apprise your relatives of your situation. I shall remember you in my orisons; and, believe me, if I ever have it in my power to evince my deep sense of your kindness to her who is now a beatified spirit, Zemyra shall find that the almost-broken heart of Eldenfeldt is still alive to the feelings of gratitude."

The farewell of Zemyra was rendered almost inarticulate by fast-flowing tears; and

and when the massy gates of the convent closed behind him, she retired to her apartment, oppressed with the emotions that swelled her troubled breast.

A courier had been dispatched, by the care of the abbess, to Venice, and Zemyra anxiously expected his return. To beguile the tedious hours, she strayed through the romantic grounds belonging to the convent, which extended to the banks of a small river, the bound of separation between the domains of St. Alba and the adjacent territory. Here, in contemplating the beauties of the autumnal scenery, she spent the greatest part of her time; and as she reclined on a moss-grown seat that was placed on the bank of the stream, often from this sequestered spot her fervent aspirations ascended to the Giver of all good, whose hand had guided her in safety through so many dangers, and in the seasons of the greatest extremity had raised

raised her up valuable and sincere friends, where she could least hope to find them.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Now shield with shield, with helmet helmet clos’d,
To armour armour, lance to lance oppos’d ;
Host against host, with shadowy squadrons drew,
The sounding darts in iron tempests flew ;
Victor and vanquish’d join promiscuous cries,
And conquering shouts and dying groans arise ;
With streaming blood the slippery fields are dyed.”

THE widowed Eldenfeldt retraced, with languid steps, the road to Belgrade. On his arrival at the city, he found that the confederate armies had commenced their march towards the shores of the Hellespont. The impetuosity of the cardinal-legate would have hurried the troops over the snow-capt crags of the rugged
Hæmus,

Hæmus, but the experience of Huniades overruled this rash design; and the Christian army, under the supreme command of Vladislaus, pursued the tedious but more secure route, over a champaign country, along the shores of the Euxine.

Julian, either personally or by his emissaries, had excited a crusading spirit in many parts of Europe, and by the golden hopes that he held out of an easy conquest of the Ottoman power, induced numerous adventurers to join in this expedition against the infidels.

Philip, duke of Burgundy, inspired with chivalrous sentiments, and seconded by the enthusiasm of his subjects, fitted out a gallant fleet, which sailed from the coast of Flanders to join the naval forces of the ecclesiastical states and those of the republics of Genoa and Venies. This formidable armament entered the Hellespont

lespont in triumph, and the intelligence of its arrival was the signal for the armies of Christendom to march from the place of rendezvous, as the operations of Vladislaus were to be seconded by the fleets of his allies.

The troops had entered the plains of Bulgaria before Eldenfeldt came up with them. Followed by a single attendant, he guided his weary steed up the steep ascent of a toilsome hill, as the sun was fast declining amidst the purple clouds of the western horizon. The baron's imagination carried him back to the period, when the hours spent in the toils of war were brightened by the reflection that the smile of an affectionate wife awaited his return. Where now was that almost adored being? The cold caverns of death were closed over his beloved, and the world presented no more attractions to the widowed heart of Eldenfeldt: all he now sought, and the object

ject of his hourly prayer, was to meet death in the field of glory, and to join the pure spirit of his much-loved Constantia, in that superior world, where kindred souls, disencumbered of the load of earthly clay, are for ever united in the enjoyment of transcendent and unceasing bliss.

He had now gained the summit of the hill; and if ever martial prospect was calculated to inflame the heart of a warrior, it was such as was now presented to the view of the baron of Eldenfeldt. The whole plain of Arvalow appeared covered with troops; a thousand different standards wantoned in the air; the glittering of arms, the clash of weapons, the varied costume of the soldiers, and the sound of martial instruments, borne at intervals upon the breeze, caused his heart to exult, and his cheek to glow with military ardour; but the grief that was predominant in the recesses of his

heart soon assumed its wonted sovereignty, and the glow of his manly countenance vanished like the hectic flush of disease.

An hour after sunset, Eldenfeldt arrived at the spot where the army had encamped for the night, and on the morning of the succeeding day, he once more appeared at the head of the German auxiliaries. Those who had followed him from Italy hailed the return of their beloved general with gladness; and from the officers he received the most affectionate condolence. This was a source of mournful pleasure to Eldenfeldt, who was sensible of the sincerity that dictated it; for he knew that the gentle virtues of his departed Constantia had excited the esteem and admiration of all whom she had admitted into the magic circle of her society.

The Christian army proceeded towards the

the sea with the confidence of victors, and at length arrived, after a protracted march, at Warna, on the shores of the Euxine. Here they took their station, eagerly anticipating the arrival of the confederate fleets, whose coming they awaited previously to their marching against the capital of European Turkey.

On the day succeeding that on which the Christians encamped at Warna, when the hope of beholding the anxiously-ex-
pected fleet grew stronger and stronger, an alarm was spread through the camp, by the precipitate return of a foraging troop of horse, who brought the unlooked-for intelligence, that the Turkish sultan, whose passage from Asia Palæolo-
gus the Greek emperor had engaged to prevent, was approaching by forced marches, and that he was now but a day's journey distant, at the head of an immense body of forces.

These accounts, so unexpected, and for which they were so totally unprepared, struck consternation and dismay into the hearts of the soldiers of Vladislaus. A council was immediately summoned; and it was then that the haughty cardinal first repented of the precipitation of which he had been the cause, and proposed the disgraceful and impracticable measure of a retreat.

To this Huniades instantly and warmly replied—"Lord cardinal, notwithstanding the reluctance with which I engaged in this expedition, since commenced, I will never desert it while the smallest hope of success remains: with my faithful troop of Walachian cavalry, I will stand forward as the champion of Christendom; and who is there among the warriors that surround me, who would not envy me such an honourable station?"

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The loud acclamations which answered this bold and resolute declaration evinced the sentiments that now actuated the assembly; and the preparations for battle were begun with alacrity. The spirit of Huniades seemed to be infused into the breasts of all ranks of the army; the despondency that reigned at the news of Amurath's approach was dissipated by the hope which the confidence of Huniades inspired, and in the good fortune of that successful general the Christian army beheld their *sue palladium*.

Amurath, whose presence had been required in Asia to quell the disturbances that had arisen, on being informed of the king of Hungary's march from Belgrade, immediately set out for Adrianople. On his arrival on the shores of the Bosphorus, he found his passage obstructed by the fleets of the Christians of the West. Chagrined at this unexpected impediment, the policy of the Ottoman sultan

did not desert him: he found means to tamper with the vacillating Palaeologus, and, through his interference, the chiefs of the naval armament were secretly brought to aid the views of the sultan: they were not long proof against the wily and sophistical reasoning of the Greek emperor, and the more weighty arguments which the gold of Amurath had power to adduce. The chieftains received an immense sum as the price of their treachery, and the Turkish troops were suffered to pass unmolested to the western shore of the Bosphorus.

Amurath being joined at Adrianople by the forces that had been destined for the conquest of Epirus, advanced by forced marches to check the progress of the army, whose object was the subjugation of his dominions and the total overthrow of his empire.

On the morning of the tenth of November,

vember, in the year 1444, the hostile forces of Vladislaus and Amurath appeared drawn out in order of battle on the plains of Warna. The armies that fought under the banners of the cross were opposed to the soldiers of Mahomet; and while each confidently hoped for conquest, the expectations of neither were founded on presumption.

The king of Hungary and Poland, although young, was yet a successful general; and in the martial prowess of Huniades the Christian army possessed a tower of strength. The general of the German auxiliaries, the baron of Eldenfeldt, had raised his fame by his deeds of arms; and although the bad faith of George, the despot of Servia, had been frequently displayed in his negociations and treaties, his courage in the field had been repeatedly proved and fully acknowledged.

The troops were well equipped, and by their eagerness to engage evinced their assurance of success. On the other hand, the Ottoman troops were led on by their emperors and by the beglerbeys of Anatolia and Romania, whose names stood high on the rolls of military fame; and the great superiority of their numbers over those of the Christian forces gave them confident hopes of victory. Such were the dispositions of the adverse hosts when the trumpets on either side sounded the charge to battle.

Amurath in person commanded the centre of the Turkish army, the viceroy of Romania in the right, and the bashaw of Anatolia the left wing. To oppose this formidable disposition of the enemy, the main body of the Christian forces was led on by Vladislaus, supported by Eldensfeldt, while Huniade and the despot of Servia assumed the command of

of the right and left wings. Here the courage of the waiwode of Walachia shone eminently conspicuous, while with dreadful swiftness he commenced the attack at the head of his cavalry. The resistance of that part of the Turkish army which was opposed to him was enfeebled and fruitless. In vain did the bashaw of Anatolia endeavour to compel his troops to make a stand : they had proved the force of the irresistible arm of Huniades in the plains of Transylvania —they trembled at the recollection, and sought safety from its terrible prowess in ignominious flight. The shouts of the victorious Walachians were heard by the troops opposed to the despot of Servia, and deeming the battle lost, they also gave way in disorder.

Anaurath with dismay beheld both his wings retreating in the greatest confusion; while his veteran janizaries who fought around his person could scarcely

resist with success the ardent valour of the king of Hungary and his soldiers. Near the person of Vladislaus were stationed the German auxiliaries ; and wherever the ponderous battle-axe of the monarch, or the powerful sabre of the baron, were directed, the heaps of turbaned heads that lay prostrate in the dust marked their destructive progress. Inspired with these successes, and perceiving the discomfiture of the enemy's wings, the eager monarch urged the whole weight of his troops upon the firm-wedged phalanx of the janizaries that guarded the sacred person of the sultan. In vain did those veteran soldiers attempt to oppose the impetuous onset of the Polish and German infantry : Vladislaus at the head of those, and Elenfeldt leading on these, bore down all resistance. The faithful janizaries protected with their dearly-sold lives the person of their sovereign. Still they retreated, though disputing every inch of ground ;

ground; and the champion of Islamism, beholding his warriors falling on all sides like the scattered leaves of autumn, gave up all hope of resistance, and considered the battle as lost. The head of his proud charger, which had hitherto ever borne his imperial master to conquest, was turned from the foe, and the despairing sultan attempted to seek in disgraceful flight the safety that the fatal field no longer afforded him. While he hesitated between this ignominious resource and the imminent danger of maintaining his post, the triumphant shouts of Vladislaus sounded in his affrighted ear, terrible as the voice of Azrael, the dreadful angel of death. No longer daring to hesitate, he spurred his steed, and would have turned his back upon the enemy, when an aga of janizaries, who had often followed his lord to victory, burning with indignation to behold him desert the field, seized with herculean grasp the bridle of his horse,

as he rapidly shot by him, and exclaimed — “ Peace thou sultan of the blood of Ottoman? Shall the glories of thy war-like race be stained by thy recreant cowardice? The armies of the faithful, though discouraged, are not vanquished, and Mahomet will yet shew favour to his votaries.”

“ Peace, dotard!” cried the infuriated sultan. “ Mahomet himself is leagued with the followers of Christ. The emblem of the faithful is broken, the crescent cowers before the rising glories of the cross.”

He bent his head to hide the tear of burning anguish that bedewed his swarthy cheek, and again raising it, as if inspired with a sudden flash of hope, he snatched the talis from the grasp of the aga, and once more turned his face towards the purring foe. Hastily tearing open his richly-embroidered vest, the sultan drew from his bosom the treaty of peace that had been ratified with so much solemnity, and holding it up, as if to

to exhibit it in the face of Heaven, he cried—“ Prophet of the Christians! is it thus that thou rewardest the perfidy of thy worshippers? I call upon thee, if thou be a God, as they proclaim that thou art, to display thy power in punishing thine impious votaries, who have dared to violate the most sacred precepts of thy law, and to mock the majesty of thy name.”

A loud and universal shout from the Turks proclaimed the return of the sultan, and the renewal of the battle. The troops gained new courage, and now perceived that the comparatively small body of their adversaries was totally unsupported by the wings, which had injudiciously continued the pursuit of the disconfited beglerbegs. Vladislaus also now observed, that in his eagerness for victory, he had not for a moment calculated on the possibility of a reverse of fortune; and no sooner had the tide of success begun

gun to turn; than his forces retreated before the cimeters of the veteran janizaries. Amurath perceiving this advantage, urged forward his men by his voice and example, crying—“The offended God of the Christians has heard my prayer—he has delivered his faithless worshippers into our hands.”

From this moment the ultimate victory of the Turks was scarcely doubtful, as the spirits of the Christians sunk in proportion to the success of their enemies.

In this emergency it was in vain that Vladislaus wished to summon the forces of Huniades and the despot to his aid. The prudence of Huniades had forsaken him, for having seen the Turks retreating in all directions before the confederate army, he had seconded the wishes of his troops, and pursued the flying bashaw of Anatolia. The faithless despot of Servia had

had also prosecuted the advantage he had gained over the viceroy of Romania, for a short time; but soon returning to the field, and finding that victory was leaning towards the sultan, he withdrew the forces under his command, and hastened with all possible speed towards his own dominions, hoping to make good his retreat before the victor would have sufficient leisure, if he possessed the disposition, to pursue him.

Thus forsaken in the time of his greatest need by his perfidious ally, Vladislaus did not despair, and still exercised all the ability of a courageous and skilful general, in endeavouring to maintain his ground. Perceiving the desperate situation and personal danger of the king, his officers urged him to retreat while he yet had the power. Vladislaus, turning to Eldenfeldt, who stood near him, covered with dust, and the blood issuing from a wound he had received from an arrow,

arrow, exclaimed—"Do you also join in this advice, baron Eldenfeldt?"

"Yes, sire," replied the baron; "I would strenuously advise you to preserve your valuable life."

"And will you follow me from this fatal field?" rejoined the monarch.

"Never," exclaimed Eldenfeldt: "but I am as a withered branch, and have now no ambition but to fall for the good of the cause in which I have engaged; but you, my lord, have a kingdom whose happiness depends on the safety of your royal person."

"What is my kingdom, or what are the multiplied diadems of a world of empires, if I am despoiled of my glory? No," continued the warlike monarch, exalting his voice, "Vladislaus will retire from this bloody field with a victor's honours, or fall on the spot with a soldier's renown."

Thus saying, he again made towards the place

place where the emerald standard denoted the presence of Amurath. El-denfeldt, foreseeing the dreadful consequences, rushed to his side, determining, if possible, to preserve the life of the monarch by the sacrifice of his own. Exhausted as they were, their desperate valour again thinned the ranks of the sultan's best troops, and the prowess of these heroes, who, reckless of danger, performed deeds almost incredible, once more struck terror into the hearts of the guards of Amurath; when a random javelin pierced the monarch's steed, and he fell prostrate on the ground.

Vladislaus, unable to extricate himself, was soon overwhelmed with a shower of darts; and he expired under the blows of a thousand weapons. El-denfeldt, the moment he beheld the fall of the king, sprang from his horse to endeavour to assist him. He fell an immediate sacrifice to his boldness, for he was

was instantly overpowered and slain by the swords of the spahis that pressed around the body of the ill-starred chieftain.

Thus fell Vladislaus, the powerful monarch of Hungary and Poland, in the prime of manhood, after performing such prodigies of valour as the Turks trembled to remember. His death was that of a hero worthy of the life that had preceded it, and whose departure was honoured by the sacrifice of the life of a true knight and a valiant warrior, the amiable, heroic, but heartbroken Eldenfeldt, whose emancipated soul hailed with transport the completion of its earthly pilgrimage, and hastened to meet the kindred spirit of his departed wife in the pure regions of eternal rest.

A shout that rent the vault of heaven announced to both armies the fall of the generalissimo of the Christians. It burst on

on the ears of Huniades as he returned from the glorious but imprudent pursuit of the bashaw of Anatolia, whose division he had completely routed. What language can describe his horror and dismay, when on returning to the field where he had left Vladislaus triumphantly bearing down all resistance, and whom he expected to meet with the wreath of victory on his brow, he learnt the hard destiny of that unfortunate prince! Horror-struck, and bitterly upbraiding himself, he stood for a moment the image of despair, when beholding the Christian forces flying in the utmost confusion before the Turks, he exclaimed, in a loud voice—"Dastards! is it not enough that your pusillanimity has suffered your king to fall beneath the darts of the enemy, that ye will leave his sacred corse a prey to the dogs of the infidels? Fly, ye cowards, and proclaim your disgrace in the streets of Buda!—but ye that dare call yourselves men, follow me! and by the anointed

anointed head of Vladislaus, I swear he shall yet be revenged!—a hecatomb of turbanned heads shall be the funeral trophy of the warrior-king!"

Thus saying, he rushed on at the head of his cavalry, who determined to share the fortunes of their beloved chief. Like the thunderbolt of heaven, he furiously fell upon the enemy, and the astonished sultan beheld the battle renewed when he deemed that the death of the general had caused all resistance to cease. Exasperated at this new and unexpected attack, he bore down with the whole strength of his still numerous army upon the small force that followed the standard of the Wallachian chief. That intrepid commander, stung to the soul at the death of his prince, seemed to have acquired fresh bodily vigour from the vengeance that swelled his boiling breast. The strokes of his sabre were aimed destructive and rapid as the lightning's flash,

flash, and the long-tried soldiers of Amurath fell before him like the withered grass before the blast of the deadly sirocco.

In vain did successive ranks replace the files that sunk before his death-dealing brand; each advancing soldier shared the fate of his prostrate comrade. Supported by his faithful Wallachian horsemen, the cohorts of Amurath trembled before the destroying chieftain whose prowess thinned their firmest ranks, and they retreated in affright to the spot where the sultan was stationed, execrating their cowardice and the valour of the unconquered Huniades. By pointing out to his retiring troops the handful of men before whom they retreated, by furious threats to some and large promises to others, and by boldly exposing his person in this terrible conflict, Amurath at length succeeded in turning the

the weapons of his forces upon the handful of Christian warriors. Again Hunyades rushed forward with his small but determined band, and once more the Turks retired before the stroke of his dreaded arm. Victory seemed to have deserted the standard of Ottoman to add new laurels to the brows of the Wallachian chieftain, when he was struck full on his helmet by a stone from an engine, and fell from his horse deprived of sense and motion.

The fall of their conquering foe was at first unperceived by the Turks, who were retreating in affright, and he was instantly borne from the field in the centre of the small remnant of his faithful adherents. Observing the sudden and unexpected retreat of the enemy, Amurath concluded that their general was either slain or dangerously wounded; but, weakened and dispirited as he perceived

ceiyed his shattered army to be, he did not deem it prudent to hazard a pursuit.

Such was the issue of this eventful day, in which the strength of Christendom was deprived of an active and powerful ally in the person of the unfortunate Vladislaus. Besides many chieftains whose deeds of valour entitled them to an exalted rank in the records of military fame, the best troops of Hungary and Poland fell on the bloody field of Warna.

The cardinal-legate, whose pliant genius was alike suited to the camp and the cabinet, for the sword and the crozier, had followed Vladislaus into the hottest of the battle, and the haughty though brave Julian of St. Angelo fell a martyr in the cause he had so strenuously advocated. As Huniades pressed eagerly forwards to attempt to retrieve the fatal error into which his ardour had hurried

hurried him, he beheld the corpse of the warlike priest extended on the ground. "Would that thou hadst lived," exclaimed the chief, "to witness how the waiwode of Walachia will redeem the pledge he gave before the diet at Buda, in the field of Warna!—But peace to thy soul, since fate has destined it otherwise! Mayest thou find more mercy from thy Creator than thy fellow-creatures experienced at thy hands!"

In a forest two leagues from Warna, Huniades began to shew signs of animation. His soldiers had laid him upon a bank, and loosing his battered helmet, the refreshing breeze playing upon his pallid face, recovered him from the stupefaction in which he had lain, and awakened him to a sense of the disasters of the fatal day. When he was again enabled to mount his horse, he pursued his disconsolate way, followed by the poor remnant that escaped the slaughter of the

the bloody field of Warna, and after a tedious journey reached the capital, where intelligence of the issue of the inauspicious tenth of November had arrived before them. To add to the despair that pervaded the breasts of all ranks at the untimely though glorious fall of their gallant and chivalrous monarch, fame had magnified the nation's loss, and numbered their beloved general, the bulwark of the kingdom, among the heroes who fell on the plains of Warna. The supposed death of this great commander caused more heartfelt sorrow than even the loss of Vladislaus himself. How great then was the joy that expanded the hearts of the Hungarians, when they beheld their champion enter the gates of Buda alive and unhurt! The transporting tidings were soon circulated through every street of the city, and the acclamations that rose in all directions seemed rather those which welcomed an army returning triumphantly

laden with the trophies of conquered foes, than the remnant of a vanquished host. In the safety of Huniades the great public calamity was ameliorated; and while the nation lamented the loss of their sovereign, they rejoiced that their almost invincible general was yet spared to the people's prayers, who rested their immunity from Turkish slavery on the prowess of his arm. At an assembly of the states of the kingdom, Vladislaus of Austria, yet a youth, was called to the throne of his lamented predecessor, and commenced his reign under the auspices of Huniades, who was elected by the same diet to the elevated station of guardian of the youthful monarch, and supreme captain and governor-general of all Hungary.

When the sultan of Turkey surveyed the reliques of the immense host with which he had entered the field of Warna, he acknowledged the prowess that had
been

been displayed by the Christians in that hard-fought field. To his officers, who congratulated him on the victory he had gained, he replied—"The ruin of my empire would be the consequence of a second similar victory." To evince his respect for the valour and conduct of Vladislaus, he caused his body to be interred, and a column to be erected to his memory, which recorded the bravery and bewailed the unfortunate destiny of the heroic monarch.

CHAPTER VIII.

What though thine heaven be overcast,
The dread appearance shall not last—
Expect a brighter sky.

THE perfidious conduct of the despot of Servia had been displayed in a manner far more injurious to the interests of Christendom than his deserting the field at the eventful crisis when his aid was of such great importance. Hesitating between the gold of Amurath and the persuasions and menacing anathemas of Julian, he had promised his assistance to both. How well he performed his engagements to the cardinal-legate has been already seen; but to the sultan he discharged

charged his promise to the fullest extent, by refusing a passage through his dominions to the prince of Epirus. That general, with a considerable well-appointed force, was marching to join Vladislaus, conformably to the pressing invitations he had received from that monarch to assist in the attack upon the common enemy of the Christian states.

Leaving the affairs of his kingdom to the administration of Hameza and the newly-created duke of Albania, Castriot, at the first summons of Vladislaus, collected a body of his best troops, and hastened with alacrity to co-operate in an expedition that promised to be productive of so much benefit to the whole Christian commonwealth, as well as to the individual states that suffered most from the encroaching tyranny of the Ottoman emperors. Among these he knew that Epirus was marked by Amurath for his prey, as soon as he could find means and

leisure to grasp it. It was therefore with the greatest joy that her prince marched to join the warriors who fought under the banner of Vladislaus. He was also delighted at the thought of meeting Huniades, that renowned chieftain, whose name he had so frequently heard repeated in the ranks of the Turkish army, accompanied with expressions of dread, and whose fame had been spread through an admiring world. His soul glowed with noble emulation when the heroic deeds of the Hungarian warrior reached his ear, and in the prospect of contending at his side for the wreath of conquest, the meed of valour, his heart dilated with transport.

Pursuing his eager route towards Belgrade through the territories of Bosnia, he anticipated with delight his speedy arrival at the place of rendezvous. How great was his astonishment and disappointment when he found the passes of the

the Dwina fortified and defended by the troops of the despot of Servia, who refused to listen to the strong and urgent remonstrances of the impatient prince ! Enraged at this delay, Castriot dispatched an officer to Semendra, the capital of the despot, to demand from that sovereign a free and unmolested passage through his dominions for the forces which the prince of Epirus was marching to join the Hungarian army. Should he still refuse to accede to this request, Castriot added, that he should be reluctantly compelled to employ the forces destined to assist in humbling the pride of the common enemy, against a prince who professed himself to be a Christian, and an auxiliary in this laudable warfare.

When the Albanian officer arrived at Semendra, he was informed by the despot that he would consider the demands of the prince of Epirus, and having consulted with his ministers, would

answer it at the expiration of two days.

With this evasive answer the messenger was compelled to be content; and on the third day, when he again repaired to the palace to learn the determination of the despot, he was informed by the minister that the monarch, his master, had proceeded to join the Christian armies in the plains of Bulgaria, and he was fully resolved never to permit the passage of an army through the dominions of Serbia, unless compelled to do so at the point of the sword.

The messenger of Castriot returned to his master, bearing the unwelcome intelligence of the answer of the perfidious despot. The prince of Epirus, who had so eagerly marched at the first summons of the king of Hungary, and pushed forward that he might participate in the glorious contest, was exceedingly mortified

led to find his progress retarded by a monarch from whom, if he had afforded no assistance, he at least expected to encounter no molestation: but from the knowledge he had gained, during his residence at the Turkish court, of the vacillating and intriguing character of the despot of Servia, he would have doubted his first specious promises, had they not been corroborated by his actual alliance with Vladislaus, and by furnishing his stipulated proportion of troops.

Finding, after this long delay, that it was fruitless to attempt a passage over the Dwina at that spot, he resolved to proceed along the Bosnian bank of the river, till he could find a pass less guarded than the station he then occupied. In pursuance of this determination, he struck his tents, and advanced a day's march without perceiving a spot that afforded the most distant hope of success. At the approach of night the army halted;

and, tempted by the serenity of the evening, Castriot left his tent, and walked leisurely along the bank of the river. The shades of twilight had given place to the sable curtain of night, and the star-spangled canopy of heaven was reflected in the pellucid bosom of the Dwina, which here flowed with a course so gentle, that in some places its motion was imperceptible. The scene was characterized by a calm tranquillity, which gave birth to the softest sensations of the heart, and the thoughts of Castriot reverted to her who would have contemplated it with congenial delight—to the amiable being who had gained an uncontrollable and sweet command over his soul. It was in such delightful moments as these (for few were the hours he could snatch from the cares of government) that his memory would trace, with accurate fidelity, the progress of the few happy golden days he had spent in the society of Zemyra. His imagination presented

presented to his view her lovely form, her heavenly countenance beaming with animation, the grace of every gesture, the sweetness of every expression.—“Oh! could I live,” he mentally exclaimed—“could I but live those happiest moments of my existence over again—again behold the smile of her angelic face, and hear the sweet accents of her voice; what price would be too high to pay for bliss so exquisite?—My life—my kingdom?—No! Zemyra would despise the man that could basely desert those who have drawn their swords in his cause, and spurn with indignation him that would sacrifice patriotism to passion. Exalted maid! though separated from thee, it shall be the boast of Castriot to live worthy of thy virtues, and to shun, as the dreadful basilisk, every action that would raise a blush on thy cheek for the weakness of him whom thou hast thought worthy of thine highly-prized esteem.”

His reflections turned with delight, mingled with sorrow, to the hour when, on the beach at Mondania, he had exchanged a long, perhaps an eternal farewell, with his beloved. How little did he then anticipate the changes, the surprising revolutions, which a few short moons had witnessed! From a profession of Islamism, he had become a follower of the religion of Christ, and from the gilded fetters of the service of Amurath, he had risen to the arduous but glorious station of sovereign of a brave and an emancipated nation. Amidst all these vicissitudes, his heart still acknowledged the sweet dominion of the fair Greek, who had first taught the youthful warrior to love; and though the secret of his passion was confined to his own breast, yet the flame was not smothered, nor did it burn less brightly in concealment.

Zemyra was to Castriot, in perplexity
and

and danger, what the polar star is to the mariner when tossed upon the waves of the ocean; her loved image pointed to happier scenes; and in hours of prosperity and conquest, the fondly-cherished thought that she might one day share the fruits of his labours, formed the bright reward of his exertions. But despondence would oftentimes usurp the throne of hope, and, pointing to the shore of Mondania, tell the prince that he then parted from his beloved Zemyra for ever. The gift of gratitude she had conferred, which he would fain have construed into love, was doubly dear; and he prized the crucifix which had been Zemyra's with more enthusiasm than a devotee does the sole existing relic of a canonized saint.

The idea that now pressed upon his mind, that he should behold Zemyra no more, was a thought so distressing that he could not bear to dwell on it, and he attempted to banish the subject by turning

ing his thoughts to the obstacles he had to surmount in prosecuting his march. As he gazed on the river, he cast a despairing eye on the opposite bank, and beheld the shore rising in such craggy abruptness, and covered with such impenetrable woods as defied approach, and evinced the total impracticability of leading an army in that direction. While his thoughts recurred to the gallant force he was thus prevented from joining, his bosom burned with rage, when he considered that his tardy march would be attributed to every cause but the true one.

From this train of irritating reflections he was aroused by the sound of the trampling of horses, which appeared to issue from the wood, that extended almost to the brink of the river. The prince now perceived lights moving through the wood, and, to escape observation, as well as to ascertain whether the sounds he had heard proceeded from friends

friends or enemies, he concealed himself behind a thicket. The circumstance that excited his attention awakened his apprehensions that the despot, not content with denying him a passage through his dominions, would add to his perfidious conduct by attacking him by surprise in the encampment, or harassing his army on the march; he therefore waited with great anxiety the appearance of those from whom the sounds proceeded. After a few minutes' suspense, the light which had before been imperfectly discerned now appeared nearer, and he perceived that it was emitted from torches, borne by persons on horseback. As they approached the place where he stood, he discerned a troop of armed horsemen, the two foremost of whom bore flambeaux, and were immediately followed by a cavalier, whose lofty carriage and superior equipments announced him to be the leader of the band; in one hand he carried a naked sabre,

sabre, while with the other he held the bridle of the palfrey of a lady, who rode by his side, while that of his own steed was suffered to hang loosely on his neck. As they passed the thicket, Castriot observed that the face of the female was almost entirely concealed by a scarf, bound closely round her neck; her arms were pinioned, while she was confined to the saddle by a strong girdle. Her companion's eyes were turned upon her with demoniacal triumph; and as the light of the torches flashed full upon his face, Castriot beheld its fierce and malignant expression with disgust.

Astonished at the appearance of this extraordinary cavalcade, the prince determined that they should not pass on unmolested and unquestioned. He felt, in the spirit of true chivalry, an interest in the cause of the oppressed female, who experienced such brutal usage from her conductor, and, suffering them to

to proceed till within call of the encampment, he glided through the bushes, still keeping them in sight.

When at a short distance from the outposts of the camp, he drew his sword, and covering his unarmed hand with his cloak, at an abrupt turning of the rugged pathway, he stood, like an avenging angel, at the side of the supposed bandit chief. Alarmed at the sudden noise, the chieftain's horse started with such a spring as must have inevitably unhorsed a less skilful rider. Recovering himself from this unexpected shock, he demanded, in a voice of thunder—"Who passes there?"

"A friend to true men, and a foe to villains!" was the prompt reply.

Hastily turning his restive steed to the spot where the prince stood, the fierce chief beheld Castriot with his naked

naked sabre preparing to defend himself against the attacks he anticipated. "Madman!" cried the chief, "thine insignificance protects thee. Make way, I say, and provoke not my vengeance! Why shouldst thou interfere in matters where-with thou canst have no concern?"

"Every brave man is concerned in the cause of an injured and unprotected female," replied the prince.

The person who excited this altercation bent her head in token of thankfulness, and the chief returned, in indignant accents—"That woman is mine by the laws of might, and nothing but superior power shall wrest her from my grasp. I fear not the idle threats of a single lunatic: another word, and thy doom is sealed!—Pass on!" continued he, addressing the torch-bearers; "we are but wasting time in talking to this presumptuous fool!"

Castriot now leaped into the narrow path

path before the foremost horseman, and cried—"Who dares attempt to pass meets certain death!"

The man hesitated on hearing this bold threat; the person from whom it came seemed fully determined to put it into execution, and he trembled at the sight of the undaunted being that stood before him, whom he deemed possessed of more than mortal courage, to dare by his single arm to oppose a body of twenty armed foes.

"On! I say again," cried the infuriated chief; "your cowardice shall find its guerdon from my own weapon, if my commands are not instantly obeyed."

Thus urged, the horseman, with his ponderous battle-axe, aimed a powerful blow at the head of Castriot, but his agile antagonist evaded it with ease, and the first stroke of his well-aimed sabre falling

falling full on the horseman's right arm, left him powerless. Seeing the fate of his companion, the second pressed forwards, but with similar success. Cas-triot, standing at a sharp angle of the path, his back firmly placed against a tree, seemed prepared to defy the whole body: even the fierce chieftain himself felt as if struck by the irresistible bolt of Heaven, for a moment fell into the superstitious notion of his followers, and was ready to conceive their opponent a being not of mortal mould. Dismissing this idea as quickly as it was formed, he determined to assault on all sides the dreaded being that seemed conjured up to baffle his schemes, and to render abortive his guilty machinations. He therefore commanded his men to surround the tree, while he himself would face the enemy.

Whilst this arrangement was preparing, which was to employ the force of twenty

twenty armed men against one, the lady's palfrey was tied to an adjacent tree; and unavoidable vengeance seemed ready to fall on the head of Castriot: but before this disproportioned attack was completely organized, the shrill whistle of the prince was answered by the instantaneous appearance of his personal guard of Albanian cavalry, who, on hearing these words from the prince—"Seize the miscreants!" instantly prepared to obey his order.

Blank horror and astonishment filled the breasts of these nocturnal ravishers, at the unexpected apparition of a troop of well-appointed cavalry; and recovering from their first surprise, they precipitately fled into the wood, leaving their female captive to the mercy of the conqueror.

The disappointed chief, first in cowardice as in guilt, was among the foremost

most fugitives, imprecating curses upon the head of him that had wrested his devoted prey from his grasp.

While his troops, aided by the light of the torches, were pursuing the flying band, the prince hastened to release the lady from her painful situation. After loosening the cords that bound her hands, and the girdle by which she was confined to the saddle, he lifted her to the ground, and, supporting her to a bank, cut the scarf, which he now perceived prevented her from speaking, her mouth having been completely covered by it. In doing this, her face was exposed to his view, and by the light of a torch that lay blazing on the ground, the transported prince recognized the angelic features of his loved, long-lost Zemyra! At the same moment the agitated maid, timidly raising her eyes, beheld her lover —her once and again brave deliverer, and forgetting all her virgin timidity and bashfulness

bashfulness in the rapture of the moment, she flung herself into his extended arms, rejoicing in the secure haven she had at length found for her long-persecuted bark.

Clasped in each other's embrace, these devoted lovers for a time were entranced in their own bliss; unconscious of surrounding objects, each was the whole world to the other. The prince first broke the sweet silence, by saying—
“ Loved Zemyra! the moment is at length arrived, so ardently longed for, yet scarcely hoped, when I can call you mine in the full confidence of love—mine never more to be separated: my heart tells me that Zemyra will never wish to wander again from the side of her happy lover.”

“ Oh, never !” murmured the agitated maid. “ Alas ! I have known but little happiness since we parted.”

As

As Castriot gazed on the features of his beloved, he perceived that care and grief had driven the roses from her cheeks. This reminded him of the fugitive chief and his band, whom his troops were pursuing: the full tide of revengeful retribution rushed upon his soul, as the thought rapidly crossed his mind that the beloved object of his affection had experienced the most brutal treatment from the un courteous and inhuman chieftain. The whole frame of Castriot was in commotion at the idea, and he would have instantly rushed into the wood in pursuit of Zemyra's oppressor, had not a look from the trembling maid, supplicating him not to desert her, disarmed his rage and changed his resolution. Leaving the guilty miscreant to the vigilance of his cavalry, he returned to the camp, bearing with him, in Zemyra, a treasure, large as his soul could desire.

As

As Zemyra passed through the camp, her astonishment was great at perceiving that the officers and soldiers, who obeyed the nod of her lover, were Christians, although she knew not of what nation; and she could not conceive how the Turkish captain of janizaries was transformed into the general of a Christian army.

A pavilion was quickly erected for her reception, adjoining that of the prince; and as he led her into the tent, he said—
“The accommodations that a camp affords are ill suited to the delicate frame of a fair lady; but they are merely temporary, and I trust the noblest palace of Epirus will soon have my Zemyra its boast and mistress.”

“My palace,” answered Zemyra, “shall henceforward be in your presence. But, by what strange occurrence do I behold my deliverer here?—how is the sanjak

of Amurath become the chief of a Christian host?"

Seating himself by her side, the enraptured prince, blessed in assurance of mutual love, recapitulated the surprising events, by the means of which he had been emancipated from the vassalage of Amurath, and raised to the throne of Epirus, the heritage of his ancestors. His journey to Venice, and the disappointment he felt when he found she was absent from that city, he dwelt upon with peculiar emphasis. He then informed her, that by the invitation of Vladislaus, the king of Hungary and Poland, he had engaged to contribute his assistance in the war against their common enemy, Amurath, and expressed the chagrin he had felt at the delay which the obstacles thrown in his way by the perfidious despot of Servia had occasioned.—“But the ways of Heaven,” continued

nued the prince, “ though dark and intricate, are full of wisdom and compassion towards men. The treachery of the despot, which I foolishly thought one of greatest misfortunes of my life, has become the greatest blessing—it has opened to me the path of happiness, which I thought closed for ever ; and to enhance the bliss that I feel, the beloved of my soul was by me rescued from the grasp of her oppressor—I should have envied any other the happy achievement. Had I met no obstacle in crossing the Dwina, I tremble to think on what might have been the fatal consequences.”

Zemyra expressed her gratitude to her deliverer from a situation more dreadful than that from which he had before rescued her ; and her joy was unbounded at finding that Castriot professed the Christian faith.—“ My prince,” said she, “ the congratulations of an undivided heart are sincerely yours ; and believe them, I pray you, warmer than words

can express. You are doubtless surprised to find me, whom you thought in the ducal palace at Venice, wandering among the forests of the borders of Servia. Strange events have conspired to bring me hither, events in which the finger of Providence has evidently appeared ; and when in following the path which friendship and gratitude pointed out, I crossed the Alps, I did not hope such a bright reward as my adhererat to my duty secured for me on the banks of the Dwina."

Enraptured at the affectionate frankness that dictated these sentiments, Castriot poured out all the eloquence of love; and entreated Zemyra to inform him of the particulars of events productive of such unlooked-for bliss.

After recounting the narrative of her chequered life from the time she had last seen the prince to the death of the baroness,

toness; and the departure of Eldensfeldt from the convent of St. Alba, she described the anxiety with which she expected the return of the courier that had been dispatched to Venice.—“The suspense I laboured under,” continued Zemmyra, “was at length relieved by the arrival of the courier, who was accompanied by a party of soldiers destined to be my escort. The letters brought by the courier from the marchioness, my aunt, were couched in the kindest and most affectionate terms, expressing her joy at my safety, the numerous apprehensions that she had entertained, and the pleasure she anticipated from my immediate return. She regretted that the ill state of her health prevented her from taking such a long journey, or she would have come to St. Alba in person to be the companion of my journey to Venice, but promised to meet me at Udina. She further informed me that the person that commanded the

troop of horse deputed by the doge to be my guard, was a faithful and attached officer of Palozzi's, to whose care she could with perfect confidence entrust my safety. I therefore prepared for my immediate departure, and with sorrow bade adieu to the venerable abbess and the gentle sisters, who had treated me with uniform kindness and attention during my residence in their peaceful abode. Indeed, in some moments of doubt and despondence, when I reviewed my forlorn situation, I was tempted to fly from all the cares and vicissitudes of life by becoming a member of their community ; but the image of my brave deliverer rose to my imagination, and banished the thoughts of a convent's seclusion."

Castriot gratefully bent his head to the fair narrator at this acknowledgment, and kissed the soft hand that was clasped in his own, while Zemyra proceeded.

"Conducted

"Conducted by my attendants, I pursued my journey, and anticipated with great pleasure its conclusion, and again enjoying the society and protection of my respected relatives. At night we stopped at a little village, about six leagues distant from the convent, as I was informed by my guide, and being fatigued with my journey, I retired to rest at an early hour, in the cottage of a peasant who had given up the only bed his dwelling boasted for my accommodation. I awoke with the dawn, refreshed and invigorated, and opening the simple lattice, I reclined on a bench, and inhaled the balmy breath of morning. While contemplating with delight the beautiful and magnificent scenery that expanded before me in the woods, mountains, and streams, illuminated by the first rays of the sun, my attention was aroused from the sweet contemplation by the sound of footsteps immediately beneath the window. The next moment

I plainly distinguished the voice of the person who commanded the escort, addressing another in a low tone. Prompted by curiosity, I listened attentively to the subject of their conference; and although the foliage of a vine that spread luxuriantly over the cottage wall hid the speaker from my view, it did not prevent me from hearing a tale which even now I shudder to reflect on. The recital is indeed odious; let it suffice that by it I was informed that the treachery of the courier had once more placed me in the power of my dreaded persecutor, the prince of Parma. The villains were communicating to each other the arrival of Leontio at the village, and boasting of the share each was to receive from him as the reward of the successful stratagem by which I had been trepanned. At this terrible discovery my head swam round with giddy terror, and I sunk senseless on a seat. Recovering from my first affright, and reflecting upon the
desperate

desperate situation in which I was again placed, I determined to make an effort to escape. To implore the protection of the cottagers was my first resolution; but this was immediately rejected, from the dread of encountering some of my persecutors. I then formed a plan for descending by the vine-branches into the garden, and concealing myself in a wood that clothed the sides of a hill at a short distance. I listened attentively, to ascertain that no person remained below; and having convinced myself of security in that point, I hastened to put my plan into immediate execution, and succeeded in reaching the ground in safety.

"Ignorant of the direction I ought to take, I ran into the danger that I was so earnestly endeavouring to escape. Having climbed the separating fence between the garden and an adjacent grove, I thought myself in comparative security; but while meditating a more distant

flight, I perceived my treacherous guide enter the grove. Terrified at his approach, and being already greatly debilitated by the sudden and unexpected evil in which I was involved, it was in vain that I essayed to escape—my faltering limbs refused the task, and I was soon rudely seized by this hireling tool of villainy. My worst fears were verified in a short period, when the whole band approached the spot, the foremost of whom was my hated persecutor, the prince of Parma. I shrieked aloud at his appearance, and throwing myself at his feet, begged him to take pity on my unprotected and helpless condition. Deaf to my agonized entreaties, the monster exulted in my humiliation, mocked my grief, loaded me with reproaches, and swore that no power should again wrest me from him, till my proud spirit should be brought to sue for his favour. Exhausted by the dreadful apprehensions that took possession of my

my breast, I lay senseless at his feet, and in that state I was by his command placed on the saddle. When sensation returned, I found myself bound in the brutal manner which my prince witnessed, and, enfeebled as I was, the cavalcade proceeded at a rapid pace.

" We travelled during the day through the most unfrequented paths, and at night entered the neighbouring forest. What dreadful sensations did I feel at the approach of darkness, which was rendered more awfully gloomy by the umbrous foliage of the trees under which we now passed, in the absolute power of a monster, man only in form, who had shewn himself to be devoid of compassion, and whose malignant passions were his only law ! But notwithstanding the desperate situation in which I was placed, I endeavoured to resign myself to the disposal of that all-wise Providence who had been my protector in the seasons of the most imminent peril. A gleam of

hope shot through the darkness that lowered over my soul : mercy I found I could not expect from the persecuting tyrant into whose hands I had fallen, but some fortunate occurrence might transpire, by means of which I should once more be extricated from his toils. Inspired by this consoling idea, I proceeded with less dread than before, and the presage of my beneficent genius was verified in your opportune rencontre with the russians.

" I trembled for the gallant knight who so bravely with his single arm dared oppose a host ; and although I could not distinguish the cause of the quarrel, from being so closely muffled as to prevent my hearing, yet I thought any change of my hard lot must be for the better, and my fervent prayers ascended to Heaven for the success of the champion. What agitation would have taken possession of my breast, had I known that the brave knight was no other than Iskander !

I need

I need not pursue the tale; you know the bliss that followed, and more than counterbalanced the overwhelming sorrows of the past day.

"Had I met you in any other situation, dear Iskander (for by that name I would still address you)," continued the blushing Zemyra, "the recesses of my heart would not have been so openly displayed to you: but the transition was so great from the abyss of woe into which I was plunged, and which I shudder to look back upon, to the summit of such unexpected bliss, that the feelings of joy left no room for obedience to the dictates of prudence."

"Dearest Zemyra!" cried the prince, "your frankness and candour increase, if possible, the ardour of my esteem and affection. It shall be the study of your Castriot's life how to repay such goodness. But I must now tear myself away, and leave you to the repose you so greatly need. May visions of peace and happiness

piness hover round the couch of my Zemyra!"

" My dreams will be of Iskander and of Castriot," shereplied, " and those names will be the first in the orisons of Zemyra."

His lips pressed the soft hand that was extended towards him, and he left the tent elated with the joyful visions of love and hope.

The wife of a soldier, who with many others had followed her husband to the field, was constituted Zemyra's attendant. She slept in the outer apartment of the tent, while the interior was occupied by the princess of Athens. When her attendant had retired, the happy Zemyra sunk upon her knees, and poured out the effusions of her soul in overflowing gratitude to that gracious Power whose protecting hand had been so signally displayed in the chequered scenes of her eventful life. That Power at length,

length, by a train of occurrences that set the calculations of human foresight at defiance, had conducted her through the most perplexing and difficult labyrinths, to a pitch of unexpected happiness, by apparently uniting her destiny with that of the man who had so long possessed her first and warmest love.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IX.

Some strange reverse of fate must sure attend
This vast profusion, this extravagance
Of Heaven, to bless me thus! 'Tis gold, so pure
It cannot bear the stamp without alloy.
Be kind, ye powers! and take but half away.
With ease the gifts of fortune I resign,
But let my love and friend be ever mine.

SWEET indeed were the visions that shed
their delightful influence around the pil-
lows of Castriot and Zemyra, and the
orient rays of the rising sun never awa-
kened two happier lovers.

The soldiers that had been sent in
pursuit of Leontio and his band of ruf-
fians

fians had returned, bringing three wounded captives. Three others, with their chief, had fallen to rise no more; and thus the minor agents and the superior villain reaped the just guerdon of their deserts.

On questioning one of the captives that the soldiers had brought into his presence, Castriot learned the particulars of the diabolical plot that had been formed for the destruction of his beloved Zemyra. When by the fortunate interposition of count Armanstadt she was rescued from the emissaries of the prince of Parma, his rage was unbounded; and having ascertained that she had proceeded towards Hungary with the baroness of Eldenfeldt, he had recourse to his former expedient, and employed spies to watch her conduct, to discover, if possible, a rival, and to inform him of whatever might transpire in the family of the baron. By this means he was soon apprised
of

of the death of the barones and the departure of Eldenfeldt for Belgrade. Rejoiced at this intelligence, which assured him that Zemyra, having lost a powerful friend in the baron, would wish to return to Venice, he set out on a journey to the convent of St. Alba, resolving by some means to gain possession of the person of Zemyra. At Udina he was met by one of his spies, who brought the welcome intelligence that a courier, dispatched from St. Alba, was on the road, a day's journey behind. This man was stopped by the prince, and bribed to act conformably to his directions. After allowing for the time that would elapse in the journey to Veniee, he was ordered to return to St. Alba, with letters written by the prince in the name of the marchioness of Camporino. The handwriting was imitated by Leontio (who had found means to get possession of some manuscripts of that lady) with such nicety, that the unsuspecting Zemyra had

had no clue from that for unravelling the plot so deeply laid against her peace. The event proved, that although the machinations of the wicked may prosper for a season, they sooner or later recoil with accumulated mischief upon the heads of their malignant projectors.

The prince of Epirus, blest in the sweet assurance of Zemyra's love, now trod on air. His desponding thoughts were banished from his breast, and he recommenced his march with redoubled alacrity, half believing that the presence of his fair mistress would ensure him success.

After proceeding two hours without attaining the wished-for object, he at length found a ford which was slightly guarded. This he determined to pass, and placing himself at the head of his cavalry, crossed the river, and soon overcoming the feeble resistance offered by the

the enemy, he opened a passage for the rest of his army. Having thus forced his way into Servia, he proceeded rapidly as far as the capital, where the accounts of the fatal issue of the battle of Warna checked his further progress.

Alarmed at this intelligence, he hastened to return, as he well knew that Amurath would now have leisure to turn his whole force against Epirus. He was sufficiently acquainted with the disposition of the Turkish sultan to know that his threatened vengeance against his kingdom was not forgotten, and that the opportunity for gratifying his fury was now arrived. Having dropped a tear to the memories of the ill-starred Vladislaus and the heroes of Warna, and execrated the consummate perfidy of the despot of Servia, he marched towards Epirus with all possible expedition.

His watchful tenderness for the safety
and

and comfort of Zemyra prompted him to be constantly near her; and she beheld with pride and pleasure the champion of his country and the idol of his soldiers at her side, confessing with rapture the absolute dominion which her beauty and virtues had gained over his soul. The fatigues of the rapid march and the inconveniences of a camp were alike disregarded in the society of her warlike lover by the princess of Athens, who, though nursed in the lap of affluence and luxury, had experienced the bitter contrast, and had learnt to profit by the impressive lessons of sad experience.

The snow-clad mountains of Albania were hailed with delight by the troops; they brought to their minds a thousand tender recollections, a thousand pleasing sensations: each soldier trod with a lighter step, every countenance beamed with fresh animation, as they approached their native hills. Castriot pointed out
to

virtues and shining qualities, than by his sovereign rank.

The nobility of Epirus who had fled from the tyranny and oppression of the Turkish sanjaks into the neighbouring countries, now returned to their native land, and took possession of their patrimonial domains. Many who at the beginning of Castriot's bold and hazardous enterprise had been unwilling to leave their exiled security, from fear of his success against the colossal power of the Ottoman sultan, no longer hesitated when the news of the successive victories of the prince reached them.

Thus, at his return from Servia, the sovereign of Epirus found himself surrounded by a host of feudal lords, the tried supporters of the ancient and royal house of Castriot—chiefs who exulted in the succession of a prince whose conduct

duet and abilities, displayed at this early period; afforded the cheering prospect of a glorious and happy reign. They welcomed him at the gates of Croia with every expression of joy and loyalty; and on the morrow the levee of the prince of Epirus seemed rather that of a monarch who had been firmly seated on his throne during a long series of years, than that of a youthful sovereign whose kingdom was scarcely wrested from the grasp of a powerful enemy.

Of all the congratulations which were made to the prince on his arrival, none were so welcome as those of the friend of his bosom, Alexis. With all the warmth of disinterested friendship, he expressed to Castriot his sincere joy at the happy meeting with the object of his love, the particulars of which the eager prince embraced the first opportunity of communicating to his friend. The delicacy of Zemysra shrank from the public gaze

which she must have encountered, had she accompanied the prince in his public entry into the metropolis; she was therefore consigned to the care of Uracontes, who conducted her to his palace, where she was received by his matronly consort with all the tenderness and respect due to the exalted rank she was about to fill. It was hither that Castriot repaired with Alexis as soon as he could seize a moment of leisure, and affectionately welcoming her to his capital, he introduced Alexis to her as the friend who had often formed the subject of their conversation.

Notwithstanding the partiality of a lover's description, Alexis mentally confessed that it was difficult to find terms sufficiently expressive to describe the beauties of the lovely being that received him with bewitching sweetness as the friend of Castriot; and when he found that her mind was a jewel worthy of such

such an exquisite cabinet, he exclaimed to the prince, as they issued together from the portal of Uracontes—"The diadems of all the kingdoms of the world are paltry toys, when compared to the possession of the love of such an angelic woman as your Zemyra."

The news of the arrival of the future queen of Epirus was soon spread through the kingdom. When it reached the ears of the duke of Albania, it became a fresh source of vexation to that discontented and aspiring nobleman. He saw in Zemyra a new barrier placed between him and the prince, and he secretly determined, by any means, however unwarrantable, to remove an obstacle so dangerous to his ambitious and designing views. His first object was to endeavour to gain Hamesa to his interest; and this he persuaded himself would not be a difficult task, as he could not for a moment suppose but Hamesa would be inwardly chagrined at

the prospect of an union which, by producing heirs to the throne of Epirus, would for ever exclude him from the hope of succession.

The disposition of this kinsman of Castrion was warm and open, and if hurried by the eagerness of his temper into errors and excesses, he could never sufficiently atone for his folly : but his frankness made him oftentimes the dupe of the designing, and his sense of the inviolability of an engagement was so high, that frequently, while bitterly regretting it, he would scorn to retract from the performance of his promise. Moneses endeavoured to sound him, by dark hints and half-expressed sentiments; but his crafty intentions were defeated by the direct and frank answers which he received from Hamesa. That prince, far from entertaining any invidious sentiments, at the event which caused such rancour in the breast of Moneses, had been

been among the foremost to congratulate his kinsman on the bright prospect of happiness which his late expedition had opened to his view. Hopeless of gaining the plain-dealing Hamesa to his purpose at this time, the crafty Moneses did not despair of completing his intended design on some future occasion, when his warmth of temper might betray him into the snares which his cooler reflection would teach him to avoid. Leaving him, therefore, he turned his attention to the projection of other machinations to promote his ambitious design.

The days of Castrion were consecrated to the good of his people and the safety of his dominions ; but when the mild shades of twilight succeeded to the glare of sunshine, love claimed a few delightful moments, and in the society of Zemysra he found an abundant reward for his toils. The amiable partner of Uracontes, though far advanced into the vale

of years, had none of the moroseness of age, but possessed in an eminent degree all the qualities that could excite the esteem, and gain the affections of a warm and youthful heart.

Within a few days after Zemyra became an inmate of the palace of Uracontes, so perfect was the understanding that subsisted between them, that they were to each other as a tender mother and an affectionate daughter. The many disastrous events of Zemyra's eventful life, which she related with artless simplicity, frequently beguiled the countess of her tears, and drew from her the assertions that her sufferings richly deserved the bright reward destined for her, in the affection of the noble-minded and all-accomplished Castriot. The blushes of Zemyra warned her estimable friend not to pursue the subject; although her heart secretly exulted in the choice she had made, she revolted from evincing

cing that exultation even to her dearest friends.

The smiles of a loved female can excite to the noblest deeds, and the hope of her approbation gives energy to the noblest designs that human wisdom can devise or human skill execute. The society of Zemyra imparted vigour to the judiciously-formed plans of Castriot. She listened with delighted attention to his details of what he had done, and what remained to be performed. The complicated system of government, as connected with the prosperity and happiness of a numerous population of her fellow-creatures, was to Zemyra an object of the deepest interest; and she displayed a comprehension and power of intellect in this abstruse and unfeminine study, that at once astonished and delighted her enraptured lover. But the intercourse which Zemyra had enjoyed with the marchioness of Camporino had accus-

tamed her to habits of deep thought, and taught her to reason on every subject that was worthy of her attention. When returning to the royal palace after an evening thus spent, Castriot would mentally exclaim—"Surely I am the peculiar favourite of Heaven, in being blest with the unrivalled affections of one whose form is more beautiful than the houris of Mahomet's paradise, and whose mind is stored with the wisdom of sages? May I prove ever worthy of the transcendant blessings which all-bounteous Heaven hath conferred upon me!"

The great fundamental truths of that religion of which Castriot had lately become a professor, also formed an interesting theme for the lovers. The prince, when the perfidious conduct of Amurath was discovered to him, in the warmth of resentment and indignation at such black treachery, abjured the religion of Mahomet, which abjuration he afterwards publicly

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he faith he had embraced:
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rbidding features with which
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hich the prince made into
nt subject, Zemyra was his
and the interesting task was
ubly delightful from her par-
its pursuit.

had consented to unite her
Castriot's by the indissoluble
marriage, and to bestow her

hand on him who had long possessed her heart; but before the solemnization of the nuptial rite, she wished to acquaint her Venetian relatives with the bright prospects which awaited her.

Castriot, studying to gratify her slightest wish, immediately determined to send Alexis to Venice, in the capacity of his ambassador, to notify to the doge the projected alliance of the prince of Epirus with his fair kinswoman, the princess of Athens, and to declare his wish to form a league with the republic, that might be constructed upon the basis of mutual advantage, and strengthen both states against their common enemy, the sultan of Turkey.

Every preparation being made for the departure of Alexis, on a scale of magnificence suitable to the dignity of his sovereign, he sailed with a large retinue from Durazzo. Castriot was sufficiently acquainted

acquainted with the foible of the doge, who was fond to excess of the outward demonstrations of superior rank. The splendour of royalty was alike disregarded by Castriot and his representative at the court of the doge, but in the magnificent retinue that followed Alexis, the vanity of Palozzi was gratified, and not that of the prince of Epirus or his ambassador.

Besides the epistle of Castriot to the doge, Alexis was the bearer of letters, couched in the warmest terms, from Zemysra to the marchioness and her cousin Marcianna. She detailed the particulars of the perilous events which at length had terminated in unexpected happiness, and concluded with assuring them that, blessed as she considered herself, her present prospects never, for a moment, weakened the feelings of affectionate gratitude which she cherished for her dear and only relatives.

The ambassador of the sovereign of Epirus, whose well-earned fame had gained him the respect and admiration of all the potentates of Europe, was graciously, though pompously, received by the doge. That prince learnt, with surprise and pleasure, the singular good fortune of his kinswoman, who, after so many vicissitudes, was at length in safety under the protection of her affianced husband, and that husband a sovereign prince. He was also greatly pleased at the amicable intercourse which this union would probably create between Epirus and the republic; and the proposition of Castriot for an alliance with the Venetian seigniory was laid before the assembled magnificoes, and received with unanimous assent by the whole council. The senators of Venice wisely considered that in strengthening the newly-acquired power of Castriot by their alliance, they should be studying the best interests of the republic, for in the rapidly-increasing

ing power of the Turks they beheld a formidable enemy. They were well aware that the Grecian islands, which Venice now regarded as the brightest jewels of her ducal crown, had long been the object of Amurath's all-grasping desires, and they considered their safety guaranteed, as long as the prince of Epirus continued successfully to oppose the designs of the sultan upon his dominions.

Alexis, having transacted the preliminary parts of his negociation with the doge, was conducted by his order to the apartments of his sister. He was announced to the marchioness by a page, and entered the splendid saloon where that lady and her niece were sitting. They had been informed of the arrival of an ambassador from the prince of Epirus, but did not suppose that they were interested in the intelligence he brought. Great was the astonishment of the marchioness when she found, from

the

the contents of her letter, that her niece, concerning whom she had entertained such alarming apprehensions, was possessed of happiness and security. The gentle Marciana was not less pleased than her aunt, to find that her fair cousin's prospects were so promising. But, although she had been assured that Zemysra's lover, whom she had seen disguised as a merchant, was a warrior, she was not prepared to recognize in him the brave and far-famed prince of Epirus.

The conversation which followed the perusal of the letters between the marchioness, Marciana, and the young envoy, was alike agreeable to all parties; for although the part which Marciana took in it was chiefly confined to answers to any interrogatory remarks, she nevertheless regretted the arrival of the hour when etiquette admonished Alexis to retire.

The manners of Alexis were polished,
although

although he was perfectly unassuming; his countenance wore no external marks of vivacity and gaiety, while calm unruffled bliss reigned in his soul: to those who could appreciate the value of internal charms, the character of Alexis shone forth in its brightest lustre. Neither had nature been niggardly to him in personal endowments; but a reflecting philosophical mind had so curtailed those youthful ebullitions of passion which few in the heyday of their blood can control, that the placid regularity of his countenance, by superficial observers, would be regarded as indicative of stoical stupidity. He had been stigmatized by the Byzantine dames as a cynic, from the disregard which he shewed to their charms, and the severity with which he censured their conduct. Born and educated in the magnificent and luxurious city of Constantinople, he imbibed the elegance of the court of Palæologus, and, being possessed of a strong mind,

be-

he learnt to imitate what was amiable and worthy, while he rejected whatever was frivolous and vicious in the pursuits of the cavaliers who thronged the saloons of the imperial palace. Many of the wisest and most virtuous of the nobles, those true descendants of the ancient Greeks and Romans, venerated the virtues of Alexis, and acknowledged the charms of his conversation. When in the society of those whose character and wisdom he respected, Alexis was not the same as he appeared in the circle of frivolous dames and courtly parasites.

The city of Constantine was the ark in which the precious relics of the learning, the arts, and sciences of antiquity, had been preserved amidst the overwhelming torrent of barbarian ignorance. From thence, when the first fury of the desolating hordes of the north was subsided, the beams of learning again illumined the benighted world. The cultivation

tivation of the beauties of ancient lore had been the favourite study of Alexis, and his classical attainments made him no less a welcome guest to the marchioness, than his amiable and unassuming manners to the young duchess. To the marchioness he could talk, with unaccustomed enthusiasm, of the departed glories of ancient Greece and Rome—of the bravery of their warriors, and the wisdom of their sages ; and, turning from the heart-enlivening retrospect, would deplore with her the abject state of those once-celebrated countries, which were now for the most part sunk in the lowest abyss of slavery and ignorance.

With the gentle Marciana, Alexis could converse on the interesting topics of love and chivalry. He could also follow her in her admiration of music, for Marciana was a true Italian in this respect, and acknowledged herself a slave to the charms of harmony. Thus the fund

fund of various knowledge, which Alexis had acquired from personal observation, as well as from the works of the best authors, made him ever a welcome visitor to the apartments of the marchioness di Camporino and her niece. Every hour that he could decorously reserve from the business on which he came to Venice was spent in the society of these illustrious females; and Alexis confessed that the learning of the marchioness, and the modest loveliness of the young duchess, were unequalled by the most exalted and accomplished ladies of the Byzantine court.

The completion of the negotiations, which was protracted from day to day by a routine of punctilious and prolix forms, was unheeded by Alexis. Satisfied with doing all in his power to forward the treaty, he was little inclined to remonstrate against the tardy manner in which the negotiations proceeded.

The

The sage conversation of the marchioness soon became less attractive to Alexis than the society of the artless Marciana. Female delicacy, amounting to timidity of manners, and female modesty, approaching to bashfulness and reserve, were much appreciated and greatly admired by Alexis. In the manners of the dames of Constantinople he had been accustomed to witness such forward boldness and masculine assurance, that he idolized the reverse of this disgusting conduct; and he found in Marciana a female, rich in his favourite endowments. The reserve, which to others was intolerable, and considered as haughty arrogance, was regarded by Alexis as one of her greatest charms. He found in his own breast a congenial feeling—a feeling of which, till now, he had never found the counterpart in a female bosom.

This retiring carriage had been the cause why Marciana, in the prime of youth

youth and beauty, was still without a lover. Many of the noblest and most accomplished of the cavaliers of Italy had acknowledged the power of her charms, and aspired to the hand of the heiress of Palozzi; but either the coldness and reserve of Marciana had loosened the chains her beauty had forged, or the doge had forbidden their pretensions with arrogant haughtiness: it was his determination, that none who was not decked with the insignia of royalty, or the presumptive heir to sovereignty, should wed the beautiful and richly-endowed daughter of the chief magistrate of the powerful Venetian republic, and dare to mix his blood with the stream that flowed through the veins of the illustrious race of Palozzi.

When Alexis, on a former occasion, had visited Venice with his friend, his stay had been of such short duration, that no opportunity was afforded him of viewing

viewing the many public edifices, and other works of art, with which this emporium of the commerce of the world was enriched. Although the protracted length of the negotiations now afforded him ample leisure, the curiosities of Venice were unvisited by Alexis; every pleasure which caused his absence from Marciana lost its zest, and, far from affording any gratification to him, was considered by him as irksome, and regarded as so many precious moments utterly wasted. From what he had remarked of the conduct of Marciana towards him, he could without vanity assure himself that she regarded him with preference: yet what hope did this assurance give Alexis? Was it accompanied by the delightful pleasure attendant on a successful passion? No: thought he felt that to live deprived of Marciana was equivalent to banishment from paradise, his most sanguine hopes never flattered him for a moment with being able

able to gain the hand of the daughter of Palozzi. He had been treated by the doge with all the attention and ceremony that his office demanded; but Alexis easily discerned that it was not to himself, but to the ambassador, that this respect was paid. He had also accidentally become acquainted that the doge had privately expressed his surprise that the prince of Epirus should not have selected one of the nobles of his kingdom to be his representative, but had appointed an exiled Greek to fill the office of ambassador.

Such being his sentiments, how greatly would his pride be wounded to learn, that he whom he regarded so contemptuously was the object of his daughter's affection, and that an almost nameless wanderer, the creature of his sovereign's bounty, had dared to aspire to an union with a branch of his illustrious stock! Notwithstanding the correctness of this reasoning,

reasoning; Alexis was too deeply involved in the labyrinth of love to extricate himself by the aid of philosophical arguments. He therefore banished reflection, and continued to drink deeper of the passion, without considering what would be the issue; and while in the presence of Marciana, all but that beloved object was forgotten.

The breast of the gentle Marciana was indeed sensibly affected by the merits of Alexis. She saw in reality the being which till now she had only viewed in her mind's eye; the ideal creature of her imagination was embodied before her; and when Alexis entered the saloon as the bearer of her cousin's letters, she scarcely refrained from uttering an exclamation of joyful surprise, at the apparition of a form which, she believed, existed only in her fancy. The favourable impression he made at the first interview was increased on further acquaintance,

quaintance, and Marciana heedlessly imbibed copious draughts of the intoxicating passion.

The marchioness was almost invariably present during the visits of the young ambassador to her apartments, and to her Alexis addressed the chief part of his conversation, so that the marchioness never entertained the least suspicion that a mutual and ardent affection subsisted between the young envoy and her niece.

When the remarks of Alexis were congenial to the sentiments of Marciana, the speaking glances of her full blue eye expressed her warm approbation and perfect coincidence. But when she encountered his impassioned gaze, those eyes were bent instantly to the ground, and the sweet confusion that mantled in her lovely face gave her new graces in the sight of Alexis.

Not

Not one of the cavaliers who had acknowledged themselves the slaves of Marciana's charms, had made the slightest impression upon her heart, and her life passed on in unvarying contentment, alike unruffled by the doubts and sorrows of love, and unblessed by the exquisite joys of that delightful passion: but in Alexis, she found him who was destined at once to be to her the source of sorrow and of bliss.

The protracted negotiations were at length completed; the treaty between the Venetian republic and the sovereign of Epirus was proclaimed on the Rialto, and through the principal squares and quays of Venice; and nought now remained for the ambassador, but to take his final leave of the chief magistrate, his master's new ally.

When Alexis retired from the senate-house with the duly-ratified treaty, he

entered his apartment with the feelings of a man who bore the mandate which consigned him to an immediate and dreadful death. The succeeding morning was appointed for his ceremonial farewell to the doge in council, and every preparation was made for his departure on the following day.

Alexis, though swayed by the power of love, would have shrunk in horror from a moment's delay at Venice, after he had completed the business which had brought him thither; his departure was therefore certain. Having securely deposited his papers, he hurried towards the ducal palace to bid a long, perhaps an eternal farewell to her whose presence made every place a paradise, but in whose absence all the world was a void and dreary wilderness.

CHAP.

CHAPTER X.

“ I can smile, and murder while I smile,
And cry content to that which grieves my heart,
And frame my face to all occasions.”

BLEST in the society of his Zemyra, and in the anticipation of a speedy union with that dear object of his affection, Castriot was yet an example of the imperfection of all human happiness.

Exasperated that Alexis should have been appointed ambassador to Venice, and honoured with other marks of his sovereign’s favour, the duke of Albania openly evinced the rancorous feelings of his vindictive spirit. Constituted by his sovereign governor of that extensive province,

Moneses seemed content with nothing less than monarchical authority, and executed his delegated power with so much haughtiness, that the nobles who possessed extensive domains and numerous vassals in his government would no longer brook the insolence of his deportment. Having boldly expressed their feelings of disgust in vain to the governor, they represented his haughty and despotic conduct to the prince. A body of the exiled Epirots, who had composed the band which was the terror of the surrounding country as the banditti of Mount Hæmus, still followed the fortunes of their chief, and now formed his body-guard. They were also the ministers of his will, and implicitly executed his commands ; and as they retained externally the ferocious appearance of robbers, so did their savage dispositions well accord with the terrific exterior.

Grieved, to hear such accounts of the
duke,

duke; Castriot yet felt a repugnance against reproaching him with his faults; and though he listened with attention to the complaints of the Albanian nobles, he hesitated to arraign the conduct of one to whom he owed so much. At length, convinced of the injustice and the oppressive manner in which Moneses exercised his delegated authority, he remonstrated with him by letter, in the most delicate and cautious terms, requesting him, as he valued the peace and safety of the kingdom which had so lately been regained by his own assistance, to pursue a line of conduct conciliatory to the nobles, and leave the citizens and peasantry not the most distant cause for complaint.

The haughty chief of Albania perused this admonitory epistle with feelings of the most rancorous nature.—“What!” soliloquized he, “is it not enough that I have placed this boy upon the throne

of Epirus, and given him the diadem which might have glittered on my own brows, but he dares play the sovereign over me, and dictate to the creator of his dignity? It is well: he has now brought ruin upon himself—Moneses and Castriot are no longer friends. The urchin-monarch of Epirus shall soon learn that the hand which raised him to the regal seat of his fathers, with equal ease can hurl him from his elevated station."

Thus did he express in solitude the vindictive emotions of his soul: but he publicly treated the messenger of his sovereign with the greatest deference, and in his reply to Castriot, professed sorrow that his conduct should have caused discontent on the part of the Albanian nobles, or dissatisfaction on that of the prince. To corroborate this statement, he regulated his demeanour accordingly; and as he was no mean adept in the arts of dissimulation, he soon so far

far succeeded in his purpose, that the most fastidious had no longer any cause for complaint. The blackest designs were veiled by this external moderation; and whilst he openly displayed the most devoted loyalty to his prince, he secretly planned the destruction of his kingdom.

Whilst Moneses was revolving in his mind various schemes of revenge, he received, through a private but an undoubted channel, accounts of the mighty preparations making at Adrianople for the conquest of Epirus. It informed him that Amurath being now at peace with the Hungarians, his most dreaded enemies, and having effectually quelled some disturbances which the king of Caramania had fermented in Asia Minor, was determined to employ the whole force of his armies against Castriot. The fierce Mahomet, heir-presumptive of the Ottoman sceptre, had long urged his aged father to undertake an expedition against

against Epirus, and had at length prevailed upon him to embrace the opportunity when the neighbouring nations were in amity with Turkey, to chastise the insolence of the refractory vassal who had seized the sovereign authority of that province.

Nothing could have been more gratifying to the vengeful soul of Moneses than this intelligence, and he determined to make the intended invasion of Amurath subservient to his views of ambition and revenge. All the advantages that would accrue to him at once burst upon his mind, and he resolved to build his own greatness upon the ruins of his country's happiness and freedom. He accordingly withheld the intelligence of the preparations making by the sultan from the prince, and escorted the messenger beyond the frontiers in person, where he dismissed him with a variety of costly presents.

Calnova,

Calnova, the capital of Albania, and the seat of the governor, was placed in a commanding situation on the confines of Thessaly. Fortified by nature, it was rendered almost impregnable by the bulwarks of art, and the possessor of that city held the keys of Epirus within his grasp. A narrow defile which it completely commanded afforded the only entrance to the interior dominions of Castriot; and it was thus the gate of the mountains, which formed a natural rampart against the enemies of Epirus.

Possessing this important fortress, Moneses calculated on being able to make what terms he pleased with the Turkish sultan, and he resolved to embrace the opportunity which was now afforded of advancing his glory, and of satiating his vengeance.

The politic sultan had caused it to be reported, that the colossal preparations
that

that were making, both at the capital and in the provinces, were destined to form an expedition against the sophi of Persia; and he boasted that in a few revolving moons the standard of Ottoman should be seen floating over the minarets of Ispahan, and attest the favour which the prophet shewed for the faithful followers of the race of Ottoman.

But when the accounts of these mighty preparations reached Epirus, the thin veil that obscured their destination was quickly pierced by the penetrating eye of Castriot. He well knew that the armies were not intended for the subversion of the Mahometan sultan of Persia, but that they were raised for the invasion of his kingdom.

The politics of the divan were familiar to Castriot, and he was determined that Amurath should not find him unprepared to meet the immense host that he

he was about to march against Epirus. The character of the Turkish sultan was too well known to Castriot for him to suppose that he would relinquish his claim to a kingdom he once possessed, while he retained the means of asserting his pretensions by force.

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A ROMANCE.

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ISKANDER;

OR,

THE HERO OF EPIRUS.

A Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY ARTHUR SPENSER.

" When heroes trod each classic field
Where coward feet now faintly falter;
When ev'ry arm was freedom's shield,
And every heart was freedom's altar."

VOL. III.

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ISKANDER.

CHAPTER I.

“ ‘Twas pretty, though a plague,
To see him every hour; to sit and draw
His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,
In our heart’s table—heart too capable
Of every line and trick of his sweet favour!
But now he’s gone, and my idolatrous fancy
Must sanctify his relics.”

AT his parting interview with the marchioness di Camporino, Alexis was charged with letters from herself and Marciana, for their fair kinswoman, the future princess of Epirus. The young

duchess was not present; but Alexis was relieved from the task of mentioning her name by the marchioness, who, as she delivered the packet to him, said—“ You will not leave Verice without bidding farewell to Marciana? The excessive heat has greatly oppressed her sensitive frame, and she has retired into the gardens, to inhale the invigorating breath of evening. You will probably find her,” continued the marchioness, as she opened a gilded lattice that led into the palace gardens, “ in her favourite arbour, on the banks of the canal.”

To this well-known spot Alexis bent his faltering steps. As he passed along the verdant alleys, he endeavoured to bring his mind to a proper degree of steadfastness to bid adieu to Marciana without betraying the secret of his heart. Should she feel sentiments of affection for him, a mutual discovery must involve her in grief and peril; but if, on

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the contrary, he had been deceiving himself with the fond hope of being regarded with preference by Marciana, any declaration of his love would be treated by her as arrogant presumption.

Filled with these reflections, he approached the bower; and as he stood hesitatingly near the entrance, he heard the voice of Marciana utter, in a low tone, rendered almost inaudible by the deep sighs which seemed to rise from the bottom of her heart—"Why, oh why, Alexis, didst thou ever meet my partial view? Thou wilt depart from Venice, never to return, without even casting a thought upon her who mourns in secret the loss of thy too dearly-prized society."

Alexis had scarcely heard, with avidity and rapture, those accents, sweeter to him than seraphic harmony, ere he was at the feet of the dear object of his

ardent affection, pouring out the grateful rapturous effusions of an overflowing heart.

All the arguments with which prudence had fortified his breast vanished before the power of almighty love, like vapours from the presence of the god of day; the sweet and unexpected assurance of mutual love possessed every faculty of his enraptured soul. Every doubt fled; the blest certainty that he was beloved overcame every other consideration, and could he have commanded the crowns of monarchs, he would have thought them a compensation too small for the dearly-prized confession that had escaped the lips of Marciana.

Overpowered with emotion, when she found that her soliloquy had been heard by the person from whom, of all others, she would have kept it concealed, Marciana sunk powerless on the mossy seat.

Her

Her kneeling lover received the almost-insensible beauteous form on his breast, and transported at fulfilling the sweet task of supporting his lovely burthen, Alexis scarcely dared to breathe.

After a few moments, the crimson current revisited her pallid cheeks; and Marciana, raising her languid head; and averting her blushing face, faintly articulated—"Leave me, I beseech you, to my hard destiny! Your presence adds to misery, which I before thought incapable of increase."

"Can Alexis then be such a wretch as to become the cause of a moment's misery to her for whose happiness his life would be gladly sacrificed! I came to bid you farewell, previously to my departure from Venice; but I was unprepared for the mingled emotions of joy and sorrow that awaited me at this interview. Accuse me not of presumption, fair Marciana!" continued Alexis;

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"I was fascinated by your unnumbered charms ere I was aware of their power; but the exiled Alexis never flattered himself with the hope of the return of a passion which would have been buried in the inmost recesses of his heart. Like the Persian, I gazed with rapturous enthusiasm on the object of my idolatry, between which and myself fate had placed an immeasurable, insuperable distance."

"I cannot continue this conversation," Marciana plaintively replied. "You are master of sentiments which, until this fated moment, have been ~~carefully~~ concealed from all. Leave me, I entreat you more beseech you!—I would fain conquer the emotions which swell my heart almost to bursting."

"And does the gentle Marciana indeed grudge the dearly-prized drop some pitying angel has mixed with the bitter draught fate seems to have prepared for me? It is still consolation, and it will be

be the balm of this wounded heart, when far from happiness and Marciana. Speak, oh speak the sweet assurance, that you do not repent it, and I shall depart comparatively blest!"

Marciana, after a pause, now first raised her full blue eyes, suffused in tears, to Alexis's, as he stood gazing on the loved lineaments as if he would have devoured her beauties, and timidly said—" Could Alexis read the heart of Marciana, he would not need this assurance, to be convinced how strong his interest is there. From the conviction that our separation must be eternal, I have said thus much—more, perhaps, than I ought to have declared."

" Before I quit you for ever," said Alexis, as he stood in the entrance of the arbour, " in pity tell me, did not the disparity of our situations prevent, would you be content to unite your destinies with mine?"

Marciana was about to reply, when

she perceived a human form gliding through the trees at a short distance. The shades of twilight had begun to envelop the earth, and she could distinguish nothing more than the figure.—“Leave me, I once more conjure you!” exclaimed the agitated Marciana, in a suppressed tone; “we are observed.”

The answer of Alexis was already on his lips, when Marciana again earnestly said—“Prove yourself worthy of the affection you seek. My happiness perhaps depends on your leaving me hastily, and in silence.”

Alexis imprinted a farewell kiss on the hand that waved him to depart, and hastened from the bower, torn with conflicting emotions.

The succeeding morning, Alexis having completed his diplomatic negotiations, and taken leave of the doge in form, embarked for Durazzo with a propitious

pitious breeze, which quickly conveyed him to that port. But his soul was still at Venice; it haunted the bower on the terrace, and the avenue in which Marciana frequently walked amidst the refreshing gales of evening. In imagination he again retraced each fondly-remembered scene, and Marciana was the angel that formed every place into an Eden. These recollections oppressed his soul, convinced as he was that fate had placed an impassable barrier between him and the idolized object of his ardent passion.

He arrived at Croia, where he found the prince anxiously expecting his return. Castriot had received certain intelligence that the immense army of the Ottoman sultan had commenced its march from Adrianople; he therefore much desired to ascertain the issue of Alexis's embassy, before he formed his final arrangements. With a transport

of joy he learnt the pleasing information that his friend had to communicate. Love and patriotism were alike crowned with success; and while he received a peerless bride from the hands of her approving relatives, he also secured to Epirus a powerful ally in the Venetian republic. The naval force of that maritime state presented a formidable bulwark to a descent from the Turkish fleets; and the neighbouring territory of the republic would afford a secure asylum to those of his subjects whose sex or age prevented them from engaging either in offensive or defensive warfare.

Assisted by Alexis, and the councils of Uracontes and the other nobles of his court, Castriota now proceeded to put his whole kingdom in a complete state of defence. He made hasty excursions along the frontiers, and inspected those fortifications which their situation rendered effective in repelling the attacks of the enemy.

enemy. On the other hand, he dismantled such towns as were unable to stand a protracted siege, and with the troops withdrawn from them strengthened the garrisons of more importance. He also increased his army, by the addition of new troops from among the hardy peasantry, who eagerly flocked to join the standard of their prince.

The ancient sires, whose furrowed cheeks and silver locks announced the ravages of time, while they boasted their past services to the progenitors of Castriot, excited their sons to fidelity and bravery in the cause of the youthful and heroic chief.

The prince found no difficulty in adding to his cohorts the flower of the youth of Epirus: the interests of the people were identified with his own—the swords of the men, and the prayers of the women, were employed for his welfare.

He gladly accepted the asylum which the Venetian state offered for the aged and defenceless of his subjects. These, with their cattle and moveable possessions, found a secure retreat in the Venetian territory; and the fortified cities being amply supplied with provisions, the country presented nothing but the ground itself, and the vegetable productions, exposed to the rapine of the Turkish troops, and to the vengeance of their leader.

The resources and hopes of Castriot seemed to increase with the magnitude of the danger with which he was threatened. Elate with the anticipation of a successful resistance, he would gladly have encountered the mighty shock of the whole Ottoman power, had not the thoughts of parting from his betrothed Zemyra dimmed the bright visions of glory that beamed over his soul. He would not offer to Zemyra, who was
worthy

worthy of the crowns of empires, a hand in which the sceptre of Epirus was not firmly held—he would not bring to her a diadem which the events of a single day might tear from his brows. No—he must lead her to the temple with the hand that had wrought the deliverance of his people, or fall in the field of glory, a sacrifice to liberty on the altar of patriotism.

Such was the resolution that Castrion mentally formed, as he passed along the lofty colonnade of the palace of Uranantes. He had just returned from his progress through the frontier cities, and was hastening to bid adieu to his beloved princess, previously to his marching from Croia on the ensuing day.

To an apartment in one of the towers of the palace that overtopped the battlements of the city walls, Zemyra was accustomed frequently to retire, and gaze

gaze on the extended prospect that it commanded. She had now retired, to endeavour to calm the grief which agitated her bosom at her approaching separation from the prince.

The inauspicious events that interposed to prevent their nuptials were the source of secret sorrow: it appeared as if Fortune, envious of the happiness almost within her reach, had determined to prepare new misery for her. Her heart sunk, oppressed with dark forebodings, and burning tears of mental anguish fell fast on the clematis that shaded the window of the apartment.

She vainly endeavoured to assume an appearance of fortitude in her countenance, to which her heart was a stranger; and her eyes were still suffused in tears, when the cause of them entered the apartment. She hastily rose to meet him, while the prince, in hurried accents,

cents, asked why the beloved of his soul was thus immersed in grief?

Emotion precluded an immediate reply; but when she found utterance, Zemyra replied—“Have I not cause for grief, when my prince, my protector, is about once more to be separated from me? Alas! my misgiving heart foretells a long, a sad separation.”

“ Speak not thus, dearest Zemyra!” returned the prince; “soon shall I be again blessed with your presence. Imperious duty calls me to the field with to-morrow’s dawn; the advanced guard of our enemies are already near the confines of Epirus.”

“ I tremble,” said the gentle Zemyra, “when I think of your engaging the hosts of the sultan. The fates of my venerable parent and of my brave brother again rise to my view—again I behold the fierce Mahomet, in brutal triumph, trample upon their gory eourses, as

as I saw from the battlements of Athens. I have survived their loss, and pitying Heaven has supplied it in Castriot; but should I behold a betrothed husband, kind as my father and brave as my brother, fall beneath the cimeters of Mahomet and his janizaries, Zemyra could no longer drag on a wretched existence, but, dying, join him from whom the fates have severed her during life."

" Best-loved Zemyra, fear nothing," answered the prince: " thy orisons shall be my shield in the thickest battle. When spears are hurled, and cimeters wave around my head, the virtue of my love will be my guardian genius. Heaven will smile upon the struggles of a patriotic host, and spare the life that is dear to Zemyra. Besides, I have now a new impulse for battle—to be the avenger of the wrongs of thine house upon the proud crest of Mahomet."

Thus saying, he strained his future bride

bride in a warm embrace, and departed, while Zemyra invoked the protection of Heaven for her much-loved warrior.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

" Methought he bore him, in the thickest troop,
As doth a lion in a herd of neat;
Or as a bear encompass'd round with dogs,
Who having pinch'd a few, and made them cry,
The rest stand all aloof and bark at him."

HAVING, with the prudence and conduct of a wise and experienced monarch, provided for the defence of his kingdom, Castriot, at the head of ten thousand troops, took the field in person, and marched from Croia with the dawn of day. His army was equipped in the most complete manner, and consisted almost entirely of native troops, who were inspired with the same sanguine hopes

hopes of victory as swelled the breast of their heroic leader.

The republic of Venice had proffered the assistance of a body of soldiers; but Castriot, with thankfulness, declined the offer, assigning as a reason, that his provisions would not furnish supplies for such an increase to his army. But his principal motive for declining the assistance of these auxiliaries was, that he was fully aware how different were the feelings of men contending in the service of an ally, from those that actuated the breasts and nerved the arms of those who fought for liberty, for religion, and home. The pusillanimity or backwardness of mercenaries might damp the ardour of his faithful subjects; and if Epines was fated to fall, he would have her fall gloriously, or stand supported only by her own powerful energies. He wisely considered, that a well-disciplined army,

army, though comparatively small, is superior to a huge unwieldy host; and he doubted not that the band of brothers contending in the cause of patriotism would again prevail against the mercenary myriads of despotism.

From intelligence brought by his scouts, Castriot learnt that the main body of the Turkish army was still several days' march from the frontier, but that the bashaw, Mustapha, with forty thousand horse, had arrived in Epirus, and now lay encamped before Sfetigrade.

On receiving this intelligence, he immediately set forth, with a detachment of four thousand foot and one thousand cavalry, accompanied by prince Hameza and Rudolph count of Tanusia. Pursuing their route through the defiles of a mountainous country, known only to the

the inhabitants, they arrived within a league of Sfetigrade, while Mustapha thought them in the plains of Croia.

The sides of the precipitous mountains that surround Sfetigrade being thickly covered with forests of pine and oak, the Epirot troops were completely screened by their foliage from the view of the Turks, who lay encamped at the foot of the rock on which the city was built.

Approaching the encampment as near as the covert of the woods would allow, and perceiving they were too advantageously posted to be attacked by plain force, the prince had recourse to stratagem.

By his directions, Hamesa, with thirty of the best horsemen that could be selected, apparelled themselves as common soldiers; and having loaded several sumpter mules with corn, they proceeded

ed by a circuitous and unfrequented path towards the city, as if with the intention of conveying provisions to the besieged.

It was past daybreak, and a light mist hung over a small lake, along whose bank these pretended victuallers took their way. The beams of the rising sun quickly chased the vaporous exhalation, and they were soon discovered by a party at the Turkish outposts, and immediately attacked.

At this Hamesa and his party took to flight; but perceiving their pursuers were few, they quickly turned upon them.

The Turks, alarmed at this unexpected resistance, in their turn fled towards the camp, and were pursued to the outposts by the disguised chieftains.

Mustapha,

Mustapha, on the first alarm, detached four thousand men to pursue the fugitives, who had speedily retreated, but not so hastily as to leave the Turks unacquainted with the road they took. Whilst eagerly following their flying foe, they became entangled in the defiles and thickets; and when, in despair of overtaking the Epinots, they were about to return to the camp, the shrill signal of Castriot was echoed from hill to hill. Responsive to its well-known sounds, the dismayed Turks perceived themselves surrounded by an army, springing from the earth rapidly as the dragon-born subjects of Cadmus.

The astonished Mahometans instantly turned their backs and fled in confusion, and thus became an easy conquest to Castriot, whose loss was inconsiderable, whilst a very small remnant of the Turks returned, the bearers of the disastrous

trous intelligence of their companions' fate, to the bashaw.

In the delay which the invasion of Amurath had caused to the nuptials of the prince with his beloved Zemyra, Moneses found much to gratify his rancour against the unoffending maid. He hoped that it would not only entirely prevent the marriage, but also be subservient to his plans of future greatness. He accordingly dispatched Pezovi, a Bulgarian, to the Turkish camp.

This man had been one of his band in the caverns of Mount Haemus, and from his congenial disposition, had been admitted into the most intimate confidence with his chief. He was now charged with letters to Amurath, in which Moneses declared his discontent at the conduct of the prince, whom he had raised to the throne; and after pointing out the

the extensive influence he possessed amongst the nobility, promised not only to deliver up Sfetigrade, the key of the kingdom, into his power, but also to use his utmost endeavours to induce the rest of the nobles to follow his example.

The price he demanded for this treachery was nothing less than the diadem of Epirus, which he was willing to hold as the faithful vassal of Amurath, and to pay him an annual tribute, not only as an acknowledgment of the sultan's sovereignty, but to indemnify him for the expences of the war.

Pezovi was challenged by the vanguard of Amurath's army, and having declared that he had dispatches of importance to communicate, was conducted to the imperial pavilion.

Led between two guards with their naked cimeters to the foot of the splendid

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and couch on which the sultan reclined, Pezovi prostrated himself, and kissed the hem of the gorgeous carpet.

Having presented the letters through the medium of the prime vizier, at a motion of the sultan's hand the emissary was conducted into the exterior tent, while Amurath perused their contents.

These were of the most gratifying nature, for whilst he publicly affected to treat the preparations of Castriot with contempt, he secretly trembled, lest the repeated defeats of the bashaws might be the prelude to the discomfiture of the armies headed by himself.

For this cause he learnt, with great delight, the disaffection of the duke of Albania, and placing the letters in the hands of prince Mahomet, who stood by the imperial couch, he triumphantly said—
“ Doth not this sugar well, my son?

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The perfidy and rebellion of Scanderbeg shall now be rewarded seven-fold. Our prophet will visit his apostacy with merited vengeance."

"Even so, my lord," returned Me-homet. "The possession of Sfetigrade removes our greatest obstacle, and your rebellious vassal loses the strongest pillar of his tottering throne by the desertion of the powerful duke of Albania."

The sultan then dictated a letter to his effendi, in which he informed Moneses that he would readily accede to his proposals. Within eight days he purposed to be at Sfetigrade, and at that time he expected the city to be prepared to acknowledge him its sovereign.

This letter, impressed with the imperial signet, was delivered to Pazovi, with a costly robe, as a mark of the sultan's favourable disposition towards Moneses.

The garrison of Sfetigrade consisted of soldiers from the province of Dibra, selected for this important post on account of their hardy temperament and contempt of danger.

On Pezovi's return from the Turkish camp, Moneses, delighted at his success, immediately prepared to fulfil his part of the compact. He now, for the first time, imparted the whole of his designs to Pezovi, who, like the dark-working spider, was always well pleased when fabricating snares to entrap the unwary.

Avarice was the Bulgarian's ruling passion; as ambition was that of Moneses; and while the unbridled lust of power seduced the duke of Albania from the allegiance due to his prince and friend, the thirst for gain urged Pezovi to follow the steps of his principal through the darkest mazes of treason's labyrinth.

etc.

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By the instructions of Moneses, he now prepared to shake the fidelity of the Dibrans. That chief knew that he could rely on the devotedness of his own band; but the Dibrans were only to be gained over to his measures by slow degrees.

On the arrival of the bashaw Mustapha with his forty thousand horse, Pezovi began to sow the seeds of rebellion in the garrison. He first lamented the hard fate of their prince, who had to contend with an enemy so powerful as the sultan of Turkey, and artfully magnified the preparations of Amurath, whilst he deprecated the resources of their sovereign.

Notwithstanding this sophistry, he gained little ground amongst the rough mountaineers: many answered him by saying that the prince had proved the strength of the Ottoman armies with

success, and that Amurath would not find Epirus such an easy conquest as he appeared to anticipate.

The skirmish which succeeded to the stratagem of the pretended victuallers threw a damp on the machinations of Pezovi, whilst it was hailed by the garrison soldiers as an omen of good fortune.

Having made such little progress, Moneses, with the greatest dismay, perceived the approach of Amurath's army by the immense clouds of dust that obscured the distant horizon: the plain, stretching from the walls of Scutigrae towards the frontier, was completely covered at sunset with the tents of the unnumbered hosts of the sultan of Turkey.

As it had been previously concerted, the sultan's heralds summoned the governor

vernor to surrender, proffering rich rewards, on his compliance, to himself and his soldiers, and at the same time menacing instant and dreadful vengeance if they dared refuse.

While Moneses was engaged in a parley with the herald, Pezovi, pretending to act in opposition to the governor, who refused to capitulate, openly advised the troops to accept the sultan's offers, and compel Moneses to give up the city.

Before he had concluded a harangue teeming with sedition, Pietro Perlati, captain of the Dibran troops, springing upon him, exclaimed—"Vile traitor! is this the best counsel thy ill-omened tongue can offer? Beware then how thou again usest such language in my hearing! for know, to thy confusion, that neither the threats of Amurath, nor his golden promises, shall ever induce us

to swerve from that duty which we owe to our prince and country."

The acclamations of the soldiery evinced hearty concurrence in the sentiments of their commander, while the disappointed Pezovi retired to inform his employer of the failure of his treacherous attempts.

On the succeeding morning, the heralds again appeared before the gates, and made a similar demand, and again returned to the sultan with an answer unfavourable to his wishes.

The furious monarch now concluding that he had been deceived by Moneses, issued orders for the close investiture of the town, and that every preparation for a general assault should be made.

Moneses, in the mean while, was tormented

mented with the acute reflections of successless guilt. He was at a loss how to extricate himself from the dilemma in which he was involved by the arrival of Amurath, which had taken place so much earlier than he calculated, and had thus prevented him from preparing the soldiers for his approach.

To declare himself openly a partisan of Amurath would, in a great measure, defeat the plans he had formed. He still wished to preserve the confidence of Castriot, that he might have it in his power to bring sure destruction upon that prince by a greater extent of treachery.

After revolving a variety of schemes for accomplishing his perfidious purpose, Moneaes devised a plan which he felt assured would be crowned with success.

In the centre of the grand square, where the duke of Albania's palace

ed a splendid object, a deep and clear fountain supplied the whole city with water. Situated upon a rocky hill, this was the only spring that Sfetigrade possessed, and its pure and copious streams precluded the wish of any other.

Deeply versed in the foibles of human nature, the governor had observed the prejudices entertained by the Dibrans, whose minds were strongly imbued with the superstitions so characteristic of the mountaineer in every other country. They were strict observers of certain rites and ceremonies handed down by tradition from father to son through successive generations; but one of their most striking peculiarities was the obstinacy with which they abstained from food or drink which was unclean, according to the ritual to which they conformed with the most rigid observance.

When all were hushed in repose but
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the sentinels who guarded the walls, and whose passing salute alone broke the silence of night, by the governor's command Pezovi repaired to the well to put his master's design into execution.

The carcase of a dog was the instrument of treachery, which, unobserved, this tool of villainy plunged into the fountain, and which, when discovered on the ensuing morning, spread universal horror and alarm amongst the superstitious Dibrana, who refused to taste the contaminated water.

Nothing but murmurs were heard during the day, and Moneses beheld, with secret delight, the success of his stratagem, but publicly displayed the greatest wrath against the secret perpetrator of the vile deed, and offered a large reward to any who would bring him to justice. To increase the general distress, the town was now completely

invested by the works of Amurath, and an assault was hourly expected.

At length the Dibrans, faint and exhausted for want of water, became insubordinate to their captain Perlati, and clamorous to Moneses to capitulate on the terms proposed by the sultan.

It was in vain that the governor, with seeming anger, upbraided them as traitors, and refused to listen to their entreaties. In vain did the virtuous Perlati, with real and unbridled indignation, revile their absurd superstitions. To convince them of the purity of the water, he drank copious and repeated draughts from the well, whence the carcass had been removed immediately on its discovery: but even this failed of effect—the Dibrans continued inflexible, and demanded instant capitulation.

To Perlati's continued reproaches they answered,

answered, that their loyalty to the prince had never been doubted—that they had, been, and would ever continue, willing to spend their last blood in his defence; but to depart from the laws and venerated customs of their ancestors, and drink from the polluted waters, they never would consent, but rather fall a sacrifice to their abstinence than be guilty of an act so abominable.

Perceiving that it was totally useless to attempt to persuade men so pertinaciously bent to their purpose, Perlati represented to the governor the necessity of complying with the demands of the soldiers.

To this Moneses at length assented with much apparent reluctance, and when the heralds of Amurath appeared at the gates with a final and angry summons from his enraged master, he was admitted into the city, and informed that

that the governor had acceded to the conditions of surrender proposed by the sultan, which were to allow the inhabitants and garrison to depart unmolested to any of the neighbouring cities which they might select as their place of refuge.

Aimurath gladly ratified these conditions, and took possession of the city. The Othman flag soon waved over the battlements of Sfetigrade, and the sultan and his army hailed with joy the first trophy of their success.

With deep regret the vindictive Mahomet beheld the safe departure of the Epirots from Sfetigrade. His maxim was to keep faith with an enemy no longer than it was convenient to himself, and he strongly urged the sultan his father to send a powerful detachment to surprise the retiring garrison.

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But Amurath too well knew the impolicy of such a step, and convinced his son that the perpetration of this outrage would deter other cities from following the example of Sfetigrade, and confirm any that might be wavering in their allegiance to the usurper.

Pezovi was dispatched to the sultan, to inform him of the stratagem by which Moneset had compelled the garrison to surrender, and to assure him of his continued devotion to Amurath's interest.

That monarch commended the zeal of his master, and highly approved the secret method he pursued. He then dismissed the messenger with presents, and the assurance of riches and honours to reward his future services.

The prince was exceedingly chagrined when the intelligence from Sfetigrade reached him. He dispatched orders to

to the governor and garrison to remain in Petra Alba, to which they had repaired as the nearest place of safety: this city, he expected, would be the next object of Amurath's designs.

The orders of the prince greatly displeased the haughty duke of Albania, who supposed Castriot would have summoned him to join the army under his command, and thus afforded him an opportunity of apprising Amurath of his movements and plan of operations. But the suspicions that he entertained of his general acquired new vigour from the transactions at Sfetigrade, and the suggestions of Alexis determined him narrowly to watch the conduct of the aspiring and ambitious nobleman.

Although Alexis sighed in secret at the thoughts of Marciana, for whom he cherished a flame of hopeless love, he did not lose sight of the interests of his prince.

prince in the arduous contest in which he was engaged.

An obvious alteration had taken place in Alexis: he now courted solitude, and, although frequently rallied by Castrioti on the subject of his melancholy, he evaded every question of that tendency.

The prince, fearing that any other cause than concealed love was the source of his friend's dejection, oftentimes affectionately besought him to communicate the secret grief that preyed upon him. But Alexis was proof even against the solicitations of friendship, though his heart longed to pour all the doubts and despair of love into his sympathizing bosom.

But the noble soul of the Byzantine rejected the wish generated by weakness as soon as it was formed.—“Far be it from me,” said he, “to add to his numerous

merous disquietudes by relating my despairing tale! I well know how deeply his magnanimous nature would regret his inability to render me any assistance; and perhaps his zeal for me might embroil him with the haughty doge and imperious state of Venice."

The active operations of war in which the prince was now busied, and in all of which Alexis participated, contributed greatly to ameliorate the despondency that clouded his countenance after his return from the embassy. Not that Mariana was less dear to him than when he held the memorable conversation with her in the ducal gardens at Venice; but the hurry of a camp, and the active duties of war, insensibly diverted his mind from a continual contemplation of the personal and mental graces of his fascinating mistress.

Having by treachery made himself master

master of the important fortress of Sefi-grade, Amurath dispatched a detachment of thirty thousand horse to Croia, to reconnoitre and prepare for his arrival in person.

Within five days the sultan completed his march thither, and finding Uracontes deaf to the magnificent promises made by the heralds in the name of the emperor of Asia and conqueror of Europe, that monarch immediately commanded the preparations for an obstinate siege to be instantly commenced.

Whilst a part of his innumerable host of Aspi encompassed the rock on which the city was built with a rampart and deep fosse, others were employed in casting the metal which had been brought for that purpose from Adrianople, and forming it into massy cannon, as the lofty and rugged mountains, the natural ramparts of Epirus, were impassable to

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the carriages which were necessary to support the bulk of such immense artillery. Twelve of these enormous engines of destruction threatened the principal gate, whilst a like number were planted opposite to the eastern wall. In these two points alone the city was exposed to an attack, every other part being totally impregnable, from its situation on the summit of craggy and almost perpendicular cliffs.

Unappalled at the formidable preparations of the enemy, Uracontes and his brave soldiers resolved to prove themselves worthy of the high trust reposed in them by their prince—the defence of the metropolis of his kingdom, the asylum of his betrothed Zemyra.

Finding the gates of Croia firmly closed against him, the governor deaf to all his overtures, and no treacherous villain with whom he could tamper,

Amurath

Amurath appointed the third day after his arrival for a general assault.

To encourage his soldiers, the sultan promised to the first who should plant a standard on the walls the viceroyalty of a province; and in addition to this inducement, prince Mahomet offered a reward of a hundred thousand aspers.

Inspired by these magnificent offers, the soldiers pressed forwards to the breach which the continued battering of the ordnance had made in the eastern wall. The steep ascent was darkened by their numbers, and as the foremost ranks were levelled by the showers of darts and other missiles hurled upon them by the machines of the besieged, they were quickly replaced by their fellows.

At length, totally dispirited by the carnage of their comrades, and beholding

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ing nothing but certain death before them, the Turks retreated from the attack.

In vain did Mahomet command the officers to fall to the ground any that dared turn their backs—in vain he shewed the sanguinary example, by plunging his sabre into the breasts of several of his own troops: the panic was universal, and Mahomet, who commanded the assault in person, beheld, with infinite rage, the Turks retiring from the breach in hurried confusion.

To complete the disorder that prevailed throughout the ranks of the assailants, Castron descended from the forest of Tamenist, which clothed the huge sides of the mountain of that name, and forced the entrenchments of the enemy.

With his select band, and the aid of count Rudolph and Alexis, he spread terror

terror through the Mahometan tents. Suspecting, from the extraordinary tumult in a distant quarter of the camp, that the ever vigilant Castric had made an attack, Mahomet hastened to the spot, followed by a body of janizaries.

Regardless of the numbers that now surrounded his troops, the courageous prince penetrated still farther into the camp. The janizary aga here made a stand against the Epine chief, and another body of Turks instantly cut off his retreat.

When too late, Castric perceived the dilemma into which his temerity had hurried him; but his wonted courage and firmness did not desert him. With magic dexterity he formed the small band that fought by his side into a firm phalanx, opposing an arched front to his assailants on every side; then placing himself at the head of his wedgelike battalion,

battalion, he attempted to force a passage to the entrenchments.

Mahomet, perceiving the error into which the impetuosity of Castriot had hurried him, resolved to profit by it, and by securing the life or the person of the Albanian monarch, put a speedy termination to the war. He therefore ordered additional numbers to surround the spot where the heron plumes marked the presence of the dreaded chief.

Believing their captive secure, the Turks expressed their joy in a loud shout, as if the campaign had been triumphantly closed, and the land of Epirus conquered.

Like a mighty lion in the toils of the hunters, Castriot stood hemmed in by his foes, and though so much in their power, the Turks hesitated to lay hands on the formidable warrior.

Mahomet

Mahomet beholding this suspense from his lofty charger, promised immense rewards to him that would seize the prince. At this many dared the deed, and as many did the falchions of Castriot and his soldiers prostrate before them.

The boldest janizaries now stood appalled, and believed, according to the popular superstition, that the prince was in the possession of a talisman which secured him in the midst of the most imminent dangers. The aga, to encourage his troops, now rushed forward, and aimed with his cimeter a ponderous blow at the crested helmet of Castriot. The prince dexterously warded it off by his uplifted pike, which fell severed by the stroke, and with the rapidity of lightning felled his opponent at a blow.

In the confusion that now ensued, Castriot and his followers seized an opportunity to break through the armed wall

with which they had been encompassed. With incredible celerity he gained the exterior rampart, and being joined by the troops of Alexis and Rudolph, who were hastening to their assistance, he again formed his army into a firm phalanx, and retreated, with inconsiderable loss, to his camp in the mountains; after slaying great numbers of the enemy, and causing the utmost dismay throughout the vast encampment of the Mahometan host.

Great as was the danger from which Castriot had escaped, it did not deter him from a second irruption into the enemy's camp. Amurath, expecting this event, had instructed Mahomet to be on his guard: that prince commanded the most approved soldiers to that part which lay contiguous to Mount Tumenist, the place of Castriot's retreat. These troops received orders to keep strict watch that on the slightest alarm they might

might be prepared to attack the Epirots.

This disposition of the Turkish army was not so secretly planned but Castriot gained intelligence of it, and he instantly determined to counterplot the crafty Mahomet, and convert the enemy's manœuvres to his own advantage. For this purpose, on the ensuing night, having communicated his design to Alexis, he left that general with a body of one thousand soldiers, and, by a circuitous march round the mountain, gained the woods on the side nearest the Turkish entrenchments.

Alexis, with his small band, now assailed the camp with tumultuous shouts; and Mahomet, supposing the whole of Castriot's army engaged in the attack, instantly hastened to that part where the noise raised by the Epirots announced the scene of danger.

D 2

Whilst

Whilst all the flower of the Mahometan army was engaged in a fruitless pursuit of the invading party, which retreated in security, but with great clamour, to the fastnesses of the mountain, the prince silently emerged from his place of ambush, and attacked the Turkish lines in the opposite quarter, which, fearless of an assault, Mahomet had left unguarded, except by a few sentinels, who were quickly secured by the Epirots.

Like the affrighted sheep which the hungry wolves of Caucasus scatter over the plains of Circassia, the alarmed Turks whom the Epirots encountered, fled through the avenues of the camp towards the imperial tent in the utmost dread. The aged sultan, whose health this vexatious and harassing campaign had greatly affected, had been reclining on his couch, expecting the triumphant return of Mahomet, when one of his guards

guards rushed into the interior apartment of the pavilion, and exclaimed that the Epirot chief had forced the southern entrenchments, and, vanquishing all opposition, was approaching the sacred tent of the sultan.

Amurath, starting from his couch, and seizing a cimeter, hastened to the entrance of the pavilion. The blaze which was reflected from the semicircle of lamps before the tent displayed to the enraged monarch the discomfiture of his troops. He raised his voice to the soldiers—that voice which had so frequently been to them the signal of victory, and which yet possessed the power of calling them to their duty. The presence of their monarch reassured the soldiers; they quickly rallied round the person of their sultan, and the fortune of Castriot was at a stand.

Warned by the late peril, from which

his courage had extricated him, and satisfied with the success of his enterprise, the prince retired to the mountain, laden with the spoil of the harassed invaders, and, exulting in the prosperity that attended his patriotic endeavours, he, in the face of his whole camp, offered his fervent thanksgivings to that protecting Power whose soldier he now sincerely professed himself.

The sun had begun to gild the lofty summits of Tumenist and the pinnacles of Creis's venerable cathedral, before order was restored to the perturbed camp of the sultan. It was then that the Turkish chieftains first ascertained the extent of the loss they had sustained by the sudden irruption of the Epirots. Complete desolation reigned in the southern quarter of the camp, which had been wholly exposed to the ravages of the Epirots.

The

The princes of the Ottomans viewed, in this scene of carnage, the appalling tokens of an enemy's prowess, whom not only Mahomet, but Amurath himself, at first in reality, and since in semblance, had despised. Thousands of his troops lay dead on the field, and the tents were filled with the wounded. Even the sacred precincts of his own pavilion, the seat of the imperial successor of Othman, had been scarcely preserved inviolate from the attacks of a rebellious chieftain.

Unbounded rage took possession of the sultan's breast, and in the bitterness of his soul he dashed the royal turban from his head, and tore his hoary locks.—“Am I thus bearded in my tent?” exclaimed the monarch; “is the glory with which my days have been brightened thus brought to shame in my age, by the rebellion of a boy? Surely he is in league with the rebel genii, who assist

his designs against the followers of Mahomet!"

In the despondency that weighed down his spirits, the sultan cursed the hour that he was induced to leave his retirement at Magnesia, again to assume the duties and cares of royalty.

The beams of the sun now dispelled the mist that before had overshadowed the mountain's side, and discovered to the view the triumphant army of Castriot, drawn up in an open space on the declivity fronting the Turkish camp. No sooner did the well-known standard and glittering weapons of their prince emerge from the misty veil, than they were hailed by a shout from their countrymen, the brave defenders of Croia. It was re-echoed by Castriot's troops across the narrow valley that divided the woods of Tumenist from the city.

The

The Turkish chiefs were filled with indignation to be thus braved, and Firzah-beg, beholding the fierce despair of the sultan, prostrated himself at the sultan's feet, and solicited permission to lead a detachment against the insolent enemy, promising to bring the audacious rebel's head, or never more approach the presence of his lord.

Reluctant permission was at length granted by the sultan, and Firzah issued from the camp at the head of ten thousand men.

Eagerly they marched towards the mountain, on which the army of Castriot still remained stationary. On their nearer approach, that skilful general moved towards the fastnesses of the mountain, with all the appearance of confusion and terror. This gave new courage to the Turks, who now pressed forward as to certain victory. Their impetuosity was

D 5 restrained.

restrained by Firzah, whom experience had taught caution in contending with the prince of Epirus; he therefore issued orders for the troops to keep their ranks, and to proceed with the utmost circumspection. Thus, in close array, they marched along the side of the mountain, till they entered a valley, at the extremity of which, on a rocky declivity, the forces of Castriot appeared drawn up in order of battle.

When the Turks approached within a short distance from his front, Castriot retreated higher up the hill, where the ground became more broken and rugged. Firzah-beg perceived the intention of his wary foe, and hesitated to proceed; but his superiority in numbers, and the recollection of his promise to the sultan, determined him to press forward.

In ascending the hill, it was impossible for the troops to preserve their ranks,

ranks, and they quickly became dispersed among the ravines. No sooner did the prince from his lofty station perceive the advantage he now possessed, than he gave the expected signal to his men, by waving his heron-plumed helmet in the air, and like the high-soaring eagle, that watches its quarry from some lofty cliff, he darted upon his prey.

After spreading death and terror through the foremost ranks of the enemy, he marked the spot where the streaming horsetails announced the situation of Firzah-beg. Thither he directed his rapid steps, and ill-fated was the wretch who dared oppose his dreaded progress. The promise of the Turkish chief to his master was soon fulfilled — the warlike cimeter of Firzah fell powerless before the invincible sabre of Castrion, and a short but fierce combat, in which the prince received a severe

flesh wound, was terminated by the death of the Turkish general.

Alexis, who, with his sword reeking in gore, had joined his friend as Firzah fell, seized the standard of the prostrate chief, and displayed it in the sight of both armies. This signal of their leader's death was soon succeeded by the flight of his troops, whom the triumphant Epirots chased till within sight of the Turkish camp.

This fresh disgrace completely over-powered the faculties of the aged and debilitated sultan. His languor terminated in a severe fit of sickness; and being unable to leave his tent, the command of the army devolved upon Mahomet. That prince, burning with rage against Castriot, determined instantly to adopt more vigorous measures than the sultan would ever consent to pursue. Such indeed

deed was Amurath's dread of Castriot, that he resolved to march from the hated confines of Epirus with the first hour of returning health.

These timid purposes of age ill suited the impetuosity of Mahomet. He commanded five thousand select troops to be ready to make an assault upon Croia during the darkness of the night ; and, to guard the camp from the possibility of a surprise, the rest of the troops were ordered to remain under arms during the whole night.

But at this time Mahomet had no reason to dread the attacks of his vigilant foe. The prince retired to the mountains, and devoted the night to repose, and to the care of his own wounds, as well as of those of his brave and faithful soldiers.

The couch of Castriot was not visited by

by the slumbers of peace. Dark visions flitted around his pillow, and horrid fantasies filled his troubled soul. The form of his loved Zemyra rose to his imagination, arrayed in all her resplendent beauty. He seemed to stand with her before the altar, where a venerable priest received their plighted vows of conjugal constancy. Just as the solemn ceremonial was completed, the ground between them was cloven by a ponderous sabre, grasped by a gigantic hand; a hideous chasm appeared, and he beheld on its dreadful brink the agonized form of his beauteous bride, stretching towards him her imploring hands. In the next moment the same colossal hand was stretched from the horrid fissure, and seizing the appalled Zemyra, dragged her into the frightful abyss. Penetrated with horror, Castriot in vain attempted to plunge into the chasm, when the earth closed with a tremendous crash.

Terror.

Terror-struck, he started from the couch, and looking wildly around, he could scarcely be convinced that he had laboured under the influence of a frightful vision. The well-known objects, now rendered visible by the first beams of dawn, at length assured him of the illusion; but the gloomy remembrance of a dream so dreadful still remained impressed upon his memory.

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

“ Only make haste, my lords ! In all things else
You are instructed. You may draw your swords
For shew, if you think good; but, on my life !
You will find no resistance.”

THE vengeful duke of Albania received with delight dispatches from the prince, which commanded him to march to Croia, with Perlati and the Dibrans, as a reinforcement to the garrison, whom the assaults of Amurath had reduced. The brave Perlati also rejoiced that he was again called into active duty, as his noble soul burned to have an opportunity of wiping off the stigma of the transaction at Sfetigrade. How different

ent were his feelings from those of Moneses, who entered the gates of Croia in the hope of there compassing his country's ruin!

Castriot had placed him there that he might be under the watchful eye of Uracontes ; for though he was ignorant of the extent of the duke's treachery, he regarded the surrender of Sfetigrade with a suspicious eye. But what mortal wisdom can guard against the dark designs of secret enmity ? Moneses each night maintained a secret correspondence with Mahomet, and had promised that prince to withdraw the main guard from the wall on any night he might appoint, which was to be determined by the appearance of a red flag on the imperial tent at sunset, in the place of the green standard which always waved over the pavilion of Othman's successor.

The sun sunk behind the lofty ridges
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of Tumenist, and the imans through all the extended camp of the sultan proclaimed the hour of evening devotion. Moneses, from the walls of the city beholding the crimson standard, recognized the signal, and prepared to fulfil his part of the contract. For this purpose he demanded a hasty audience of Ura-coates, and informed him that he had just received certain intelligence of an intended attack to be made by the enemy on the western division of the city.

Totally unsuspicuous of treachery, the governor withdrew the principal part of the soldiers from the eastern wall, where the breach had been formed, leaving a small number as sentinels to raise the alarm in case of danger. He also resumed his armour and weapons, and leaving his palace, which was adjoining the eastern gate, repaired to keep watch in person at the expected point of attack. Thither also Moneses repaired,

ed, but quickly found an opportunity to retire to the opposite direction.

The night was dark as treachery could desire, and the Turks silently climbed the hill towards the breach, led by the bashaw Mustapha. Behind a projecting bastion a ladder was planted, by which the wall was quickly scaled by Mustapha, and the battlements crowded by his followers. The sentinels, taken by surprise, were soon overpowered, while a few that escaped hastened in affright to the governor. The great gate was now opened by the perfidious duke, assisted by Pezovi, and Mahomet in person rushed into the city with the remainder of his troops.

Having thus gained unmolested entrance, the silence that had been observed by the assailants was broken by the cries of alarm from the city, where the dreadful intelligence was quickly spread,

spread, and the inhabitants rushing from their houses, attempted to repulse the invaders. The governor, apprised of the event, ordered the alarm-bell to be tolled, and the drums to beat to arms, while he hastened with the troops who were with him towards the breach.

As he entered the grand square in front of the eastern gate, he found it thronged with Turkish soldiers. At the sound of the alarm-bell, the garrison troops and citizens hurried from every quarter. Uracontes lost no time in explanation, but pointing to the Turks, whom the glaring of torches displayed engaged in the work of devastation, he exhorted them to consider that the eyes of the prince and of all Epirus were upon them, and to acquit themselves as true patriots. He then commanded Pietro Perlati to advance with the Dibrans through a back avenue, and flank the Turks, on whom he instantly commenced

commenced a determined attack in front.

Whilst confusion and dismay prevailed on all sides, Moneses having announced himself to Mahomet, thus addressed him —“ Castriot is thine open enemy, my lord; he is also my bitterest though secret foe. Say, wouldest thou have ample vengeance upon him, and bring the rebel to thy feet, an abject suppliant for mercy ?”

“ Chief,” replied the prince, quickly, “ thou knowest it is the most ardent wish of my soul ! Else dost thou think that the united hosts of the Ottoman empire would be employed to crush this reptile ? Hath he not defied and repulsed bashaw after bashaw ? and doth he not now brave our armies, and dare to attack the camp of the mighty Amurath in person ? Doth he not all this ?—and thinkest thou that the soul of Mahomet panteth not for vengeance, as the weary camel

camel thirsteth for the water brooks in the sandy deserts of Arabia?"

" Then follow me, great prince," answered Moneses—" follow me, to revenge, large as thy soul can desire to keep on Castriot."

Mahomet followed the hasty steps of the duke to the governor's palace; but as he sprang towards the vestibule, the prince, suspicious of treachery, hesitated to follow.

Moneses, divining his doubts, said— " We shall need the assistance of your highness's guard."

At a signal from their lord, fifty janizaries instantly attended them, thirty of whom remained at the outer gate of the palace, while twenty followed the steps of the prince and Moneses.

The affrighted domestics fled towards the

the interior apartments, when they saw the palace-court in possession of the fierce enemy, and endeavoured to protect their mistress and Zemyca from the insults of the brutal invaders.

Meneses conducted the prince through a small postern to a narrow staircase, which having ascended, they entered an extensive gallery. At the end of this they were stopped by a door which at the command of Meneses the soldiers forced open, who exclaimed—“Now, my prince, enter, and take possession of the treasures of Castriot.”

Mahomet followed; but what was his astonishment when he found himself in an apartment, which by its appendages shewed that it had been lately occupied by some distinguished female, although now deserted by its tenant!

Meneses, on finding the apartments unoccupied,

unoccupied, stood for a moment in surprise, when Mahomet fiercely turning upon him, cried—"Traitor! hast thou dared to mock me? Whence is the vengeance on the rebel that thou boastedst of?—where the promised treasures? Are they to be found among the concubines of Castriot, or concealed in the apartments of their attendants? Is it for this I have left my station at the head of the armies of Ottoman? Quickly declare thine intent in bringing me to this place, or thy head shall instantly pay the forfeit of thy treachery!"

"It was not to mock the mighty Mahomet that I conducted him hither," replied Moneses; "nor did I err in saying this apartment contained the highest valued treasures of Castriot's kingdom. It is the accustomed retreat of Castriot's future bride. Know, my lord, that the fair Zemyra once in your power, you will more completely conquer the rebel prince than if every corner of Epirus was

was added to your empire, and every fort and city garrisoned by the janizaries of the sultan."

"Zemyra, saidst thou?—Zemyra of Athens?" exclaimed Mahomet.

"The same, my lord—the betrothed spouse of Castriat."

"Prophet, I thank thee!" cried Mahomet, in rapture: "this is indeed ample vengeance, at one stroke to humble the last of Ducaris's proud race, and bring this presumptuous Albanian to my feet!"

Moneses disappeared through a curtained alcove, and while Mahomet stood in doubt whether to follow him or not, he returned, bearing in his arms the apparently-lifeless form of Zemyra.

As Mahomet stood gazing on his beauteous prize, Moneses said—"We have no further business here. The state in which my fair burthen lies is favourable to our purpose. With your permission

I will see her safely conveyed to your pavilion. Your presence is doubtless now required by your troops."

" Be it so," answered Mahomet; " I will be guided by thy counsel; and think no boon too large to ask as a recompence for the services of this night."

The unconscious Zemyra, who lay in a profound sleep, was now borne away by two of the soldiers; and while Moneses, with his lovely charge, hastened to the Turkish camp, Mahomet hastened to join his troops in the grand square.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

“ Confusion ! all is on the rout !
All’s lost—all ruin’d by surprise and treachery !
Where, where is she ?”

HEAVILY and mournfully passed the days of Zemyra in the absence of her hero. Fears for his life, and apprehensions for her own safety, frequently agitated her breast; and in heartfelt dismay, she beheld the unnumbered tents of the Turks whitening the whole vicinity of Croia.

Notwithstanding the accounts of the prince’s heroic exploits which were daily brought to the city, her gloomy thoughts

would scarcely allow her to exult in his success. The whole city was in alarm, and the little society she might have otherwise enjoyed was now become burthensome to her.

In the gardens of the governor's palace she indulged her pensive melancholy, or spent successive hours in the turret that commanded a prospect of the valley below the walls. Hence she could discover the tents of the Epirots, and fancy that she could distinguish the noble figure and majestic front of her lover, amidst the warriors that were occasionally seen on the side of the mountain.

In seasons of bodily and mental distress, when the remedy is beyond the utmost stretch of human skill, the mind of the most hardened and dissolute is oft-times driven to supplicate the aid of that superior Power, whose laws, in the time
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of health and security, he had been accustomed to trample upon and despise. But though Zemyrá had been educated within the precincts of a court, adversity had matured the germ of piety in her bosom, and it was now habitual to her; her orisons, therefore, though not more sincere, were more frequent and fervent in this season of new trial and perplexity: her heart was lifted up to the protecting Providence which had been her constant guardian in times of the utmost peril; and though religion bade her place firm reliance on his mercy, yet the weakness of human nature caused her to tremble when she reflected on her present perilous situation. She shuddered at the thought of what her fate might be, if the city should fall into the hands of the Turks. Death would be an alternative far preferable to becoming subject to the power of Mahomet, her former persecutor, and the vengeful foe of her race.

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Had

Had not the innate feelings of delicacy that reigned in her pure breast forbidden the step, she would joyfully have exchanged the splendid palace of Ura-contes for an unsheltered tent, amidst the wilds and mountains, where she might share the dangers and privations of her lover.

Since the arrival of the duke of Albania in the metropolis, he had been an occasional visitor at the palace of Ura-contes; for although that general, in common with the rest of the nobility, disliked Moneses, he did not wish to evince that dislike at the present crisis.

None could veil the blackest designs under a smiling exterior with more facility than Moneses; and whilst he resorted to the governor's palace for the purpose of maturing a plot he had formed against the unsuspecting Zemyra, she considered him the earliest friend of her
Castriot,

Castriot, and communicated to him, without reserve, the apprehensions that filled her breast for the safety of her lover, and the issue of the war.

The duke's replies to her agitated inquiries were full of consolation; and Zemyra derived hope from the soothing assurance which he took every opportunity to infuse into her mind.

The suspicions which Castriot had entertained of the fidelity of his general had never been imparted to Zemyra. The noble-minded prince was unwilling to criminate his conduct, even to his dearest connexions, till he had received proof of what he had only suspected.

Notwithstanding the loss of Sfetigrade, Zemyra still thought him possessed of the prince's confidence, and ranking high as before in his esteem.

It was thus his presence became acceptable at all times to Zemyra, and thus she unwittingly furnished him with the means of her purposed destruction.

By his piercing scrutiny, he quickly discovered an accomplice to his dark designs in the female who was Zemyra's immediate attendant. Through the agency of Pezovi, he, by a large bribe, induced her to engage to forward his designs upon her mistress, whenever he should need her assistance.

That period was not far distant. On the night of the concerted assault, by the direction of her employer the perfidious attendant mingled an opiate in the viands that formed the evening repast of Zemyra. After having performed her devotions in the turret, which was now her accustomed oratory, she lingered at the latticed window, viewing the setting

setting sun, which was rapidly declining behind the empurpled summits of Tumenist.

Whilst viewing the glories of the radiant orb, now appearing like a vast circle of glowing flame, emblazoning the whole western horizon, she felt the effects of the somniferous draught, in an excessive languor that crept over her whole frame. She could scarcely support herself while she descended to her apartment, where she instantly sank on a couch in a profound slumber.

In this state she was found by Moneses, who, on not seeing her in the outer apartment, had feared she might have been alarmed at the noise of the besiegers, and retired to that part of the palace which was occupied by the lady Euphrasia. It was therefore with joy that he discovered his innocent victim;

and triumphing in the success of his stratagem, he bore the insensible Zemysra into the presence of Mahomet, and thence to his pavilion in the camp; whilst that prince, exulting in the possession of this unlooked-for prize, hailed it as an auspicious omen, and hurried to complete the conquest of Croia.

On Mahomet's return to the grand square, he found his troops had advanced into the town in pursuit of the garrison soldiers, who had retreated towards the citadel, at the western extremity.

For some time a doubtful conflict had been maintained with desperate fury on both sides. The whole garrison rallied round the position of the brave governor, and formed an impregnable defence against the assaults of the Turks; and the terrified inhabitants, roused from their sleep, attacked the assailants with missiles

missiles of every description that their haste supplied, from the roofs and windows of their houses.

Whilst the balance of victory seemed equally poised, the Epirots being unable to repel the Turks, and they vainly striving to penetrate further into the town, on a sudden the garrison soldiers, as if seized with a general panic, fled in precipitation towards the citadel.

The Turks, now confident of victory, pressed eagerly on with joyful shouts; while the piercing lamentations of the citizens, who now deemed the city lost, were loud and universal.

The pursuers chased their flying foe without impediment until they came to the western square, where the darkened houses gave evident tokens of their being deserted by the affrighted inhabitants.

The torches of the flying Epirots no longer guided the pursuers—they had disappeared through the street which was terminated by the western gate. The entrance of this street the Epirots had hastily though firmly barricadoed after them; and while the foremost ranks were employed in demolishing the barrier, nearly the whole body of the besiegers were collected in the square, execrating the impediment that obstructed their progress.

Mustapha, who commanded under the prince, seeing the soldiers, pressed forwards to accelerate the demolition of the obstacles which the Epirots had placed in their way. Suddenly he felt a concussion of the ground beneath his feet, and a sound like the growling of the distant thunder was heard.

An awful pause followed; the weapons dropped from the hands of the least firm

firm of the soldiers, while the others betook themselves to flight, without scarcely knowing the danger from which they fled. In a moment their retreat was prevented by an awful and tremendous explosion : the whole square presented a scene of chaotic ruin ; the houses on either side were shaken from their foundations, and the surface of the square was covered with the dead and dying.

The best soldiers of the Turkish army were thus cut off at one dreadful blow ; and some of their bravest chieftains, among whom was the bashaw Mustapha, were involved in the general destruction.

When Uracontes perceived that the Turks had established themselves beyond his utmost efforts to dislodge them by direct force, he devised this deadly stratagem to sweep off the besiegers at a stroke.

One

One side of the square was formed by the ancient church and convent of St. George. Beneath this edifice were extensive catacombs, long since disused as a cemetery, which spread in all directions through the rock under the square.

To these vaults the governor dispatched Perlati, whom he had noticed as a man possessing sound judgment, tempered with undaunted courage.

Uracontes had no sooner imparted his plan to Perlati, than he immediately entered upon the execution of it, with such alacrity as plainly evinced his confidence of success. He was attended by twenty Dibran soldiers, who, like their chief, were anxious to wipe out the stain which hung upon their names since the affair at Sfetigrade.

Having warned the inhabitants of the neighbouring houses to provide for their safety

safety by departing to a remote quarter, he hastened to follow the governor's instructions.

The combustible materials were accordingly deposited in the cavities below the square; and a train of gunpowder communicated from the back of the church to the entrance of the subterranean passages. Here Perlati himself took his station with a torch, ready to fire the train at the command of Uracontes.

The Dibrans returned to the governor, and reported that—"All was ready."

This signal, communicated from chief to chief throughout the Epirot bands, who had been instructed in the purpose of the governor, was the countersign for their sudden retreat; and the astonished Turks

Turks beheld the enemy, whom their utmost efforts had failed to drive back, retire on a sudden in precipitation.

The event of the pursuit was such as the governor had calculated; it destroyed immense numbers of the invaders, while those that escaped fled in wild consternation through the gate by which they had entered, happy to escape the terrible fate of their fellows.

Mahomet, when he found his troops had penetrated further into the city, hastened to follow where the tumult pointed out the scene of action. As he passed along the street, followed by his guards, he arrived in view of the square, and stood appalled at the sight before him. From this momentary stupor he was aroused to a care of his own safety by his captain of guard, who represented to him the danger of his situation—in
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the heart of a hostile city, without his faithful troops to support and protect his person.

Fatally convinced of the truth of these representations, Mahomet bent his returning steps towards the gate whether the few Turks who had escaped the fate of their comrades were hastening from different avenues of the city. Just as they reached the gate, they heard the sounds of—"Close the gate!—close the gate! The lion is in our toils."

These were the words of Perlati, who returned, during the explosion, by narrow passages, and reached the grand square a considerable time before the governor and his troops. He distinguished Mahomet among the flying remnant of the foe, and resolved, if possible, to cut off his retreat, and by thus securing a prisoner of such consequence put a speedy termination to the war.

Such

Such indeed would have been Mahomet's fate, but the gate was strongly guarded by a body of Turks, who had deserted their post, when they learnt the sad reverse of fortune that had been the lot of the greater part of the army.

On hearing the exclamation of Perlati, an Epirot soldier rushed towards the gate, and had already seized the massive bolt. At that moment Mahomet, perceiving his imminent peril, bounded forward; and as the bold Epirot was closing one of the valves of the folding gate, clove him to the ground with his cimeter, and darted through the aperture of the remaining open door.

Perlati and his Dibrans now rushed forward in breathless eagerness, and closed the other valve at the crisis that Mahomet had gained in safety the exterior side of the gate.

So

So closely had Perlati followed the Moslem prince, that his magnificently-ornamented scarf, which flowed behind in his rapid motion, was caught between the folding gates. Mahomet severed the scarf at a stroke, and trembling at his narrow escape, quickly descended the hill, and gained the Turkish camp in safety.

The Turks whose flight was prevented by the promptitude of Perlati were made easy prisoners. Such, indeed, was the dread of the cruelty of Mahomet, that they gladly exchanged his despotic and tyrannical service for a prison at Croia.

Uracontes was busily engaged in discharging the public cares of his station, by securing the prisoners, and seeing proper attention paid to the wounded, restoring order and tranquillity in the city,

city, and guarding it against a second surprise.

While thus employed, he was interrupted by the arrival of one of his domestics, who informed him of the mysterious disappearance of the princess Zemyra from the palace. Greatly alarmed at this intelligence, he hastily dispatched the more pressing business, and repairing to his palace, learnt from the lady Euphrasia the particulars of the event.

When the domestics, at the irruption of the Turks, fled in consternation to their mistress, her earliest care, after she recovered from the impression of terror which at first overcame her faculties, was to hasten to Zemyra's apartment, which, to her indescribable surprise, she found unoccupied: yet the door was shut, and every article appeared in its usual

usual order. In the greatest alarm, she dispatched an attendant with intelligence of the misfortune to Uracontes.

On his arrival, he caused the palace to be strictly searched, as well as every avenue of the gardens and courts. This was done without success; and none could give the least information, except that Moneses had been seen to enter the palace with the Turks.

This threw some light upon the mystery; and Uracontes now concluded that Moneses had been an accomplice in conveying the princess to the Turkish camp.

Great was the perplexity of Uracontes on this occasion. He dreaded the task of acquainting the prince with the fatal loss; yet knowing that it must be divulged

divulged to him, he sent a messenger with the earliest dawn.

Castriot had just risen from his couch when the messenger of Uracontes was announced, who demanded an immediate audience. He was admitted; and having delivered the governor's epistle, retired while Castriot perused its heart-rending contents.

At first he would scarcely credit the evidence of his senses—but the fatal truth was too apparent; and on a second perusal of the letter, he observed, what had before escaped his notice, that the duke of Albania had also disappeared, and that neither he nor his confidential servant was to be found throughout the city.

The governor concluded his letter by stating his suspicions that Moneses had found

found means to convey the princess to the Turkish camp, and by lamenting his inability to furnish his prince with more satisfactory information.

"Accursed traitor!" exclaimed the agonized lover, "this then is thy diabolical deed! Couldst thou find no victim but that angelic being on whom to wreak thy vengeance? Fool that I was, to trust thee so far! I ought to have known that no benefits could long attach thy haughty lawless soul, and have crushed thee with the first dawn of suspicion. But thou shalt not long triumph; like an avenging spirit, I will pursue thee through thy haunts of treacherous villainy, and never desist till I force thee to restore to my arms the suffering persecuted Zemyra!"

The news of his friend's fatal loss quickly reached Alexis. He hastened to

to pour consolation into his wounded breast, by stating his full coincidence with the suspicions of Uracontes that the princess had been conveyed to the camp of the Mahometan prince, and that Castriot might then hope she would be again restored to him.

As a drowning wretch seizes with eagerness the smallest floating substance, to aid his escape from the devouring waters, Castriot gladly seized this hope of Zemyra's recovery, as the only means of his deliverance from the yawning gulf of despair, into which her final loss would inevitably plunge him.

Somewhat consoled with this expectation, the prince had leisure to turn his attention to the other transactions of the eventful night, which the governor had cursorily mentioned. He therefore sent the count of Tanusia back with

with the messenger, to learn the particulars of the assault, and the loss sustained, the number of prisoners taken, and other details.

CHAPTER V.

“ If misfortune come, she brings along
The bravest virtues.”

MAHOMET, on his return, found his aged father lying in the tent, in a state of the utmost debility. The arrival of the duke of Albania in the camp was communicated to him; and it was also stated that his troops had made a successful assault, unknown to him, and were in possession of the city. This exhilarated the spirits of Amurath, and he seemed to have acquired new vigour; but when the sad reverse was communicated to him, he relapsed into his former despondency, and

his

his bodily weakness returned upon him with increased power.

When Mahomet entered the imperial pavilion, the sultan's first exclamation was—“Rash prince! what hast thou gained by acting in opposition to my counsel, and following the dictates of thine own impetuous disposition? Have I not enough warned thee against the stratagems of this rebellious viper and his accursed confederates?”

“I have gained a prize that will be a firm check upon this daring rebel,” retorted Mahomet. “His destined bride, Zemyra of Athens, is now in my tent; and through the means of this his idol will I bring this invincible apostate to the footstool of his sovereign’s throne.”

“Idle boaster!” replied the monarch; “is it for this thou hast lost my brave chieftains, Mustapha, Alis, and Fernan, with five thousand of my best soldiers? Is not thy seraglio already filled with

the beauties of the East, that thou shouldst sacrifice my troops to gain such a worthless bauble, which, once possessed, will be soon cast aside in disdain?"

"No, my lord, the possession of this woman is not the object I have in view; but the duke of Albania knows that the safety of Zemyra's person is dearer to your rebellious vassal than his life or his usurped crown. The hope of regaining her shall be held out to the haughty Scanderbeg, and to effect this he will gladly accede to whatever terms his sultan may please to dictate."

"I greatly doubt the information of this duke of Albania," rejoined Amurath. "I cannot believe that this bold usurper, who has displayed such traits of valour and firmness, will sacrifice so much for the possession of a silly girl. But the expedient may be proved, and you will be then satisfied who knows Scanderbeg best--Amurath or the duke of Albania."

Thus

Thus saying, he sunk upon the pillow, exhausted with the exertion he had used; and Mahomet left the pavilion, to confer with Moneses on the steps to be pursued.

"I am indebted to thy care," said Mahomet, as he entered the tent which had been allotted to Moneses, "for what has been already done; but I need thy counsel on our future measures."

"The will of Mahomet is the pleasure of his slave, and the life of Moneses cannot be better spent than in executing the commands of his prince," was the servile answer of the recreant duke of Albania.

Mahomet then detailed his intention of commencing a negociation with Castriot, and proposing the restitution of the princess of Athens as the equivalent for which he would be required to dis-

band his army, to withdraw his troops from the cities of Epirus, and to renew his allegiance to the sultan of Turkey.

Moneses applauded this resolution, and advised the immediate dismissal of a herald to the enemy's camp with these proposals, attested by the imperial signet of Amurath.

Whilst the future destiny of Zemyra was thus in agitation, the persecuted object of their councils, when the strength of the opiate was exhausted, awoke to the full sense of her dreaded situation. In wild alarm she gazed around the splendid pavilion, and started in terror from the magnificent couch on which she had been placed.

Two female attendants in the Turkish costume now entered the pavilion, and from them she learnt that she was in the tent

tent of prince Mahomet. They had been commanded to treat her with the greatest deference, to execute her slightest order, and comply with every wish, except that of leaving the pavilion.

What dark forebodings now overshadowed the mind of Zemyra! The most gloomy apprehensions took possession of her bosom. All the former evils of life shrunk into insignificance, compared with the magnitude of the present, when she considered herself destined for the harem of the enemy of her house.

She turned for consolation in this her distress to the hope that Castriot would compel her restitution by force of arms: but her reason soon convinced her how futile his attempts would be against the power of Amurath—nay, she even trembled to think what would be the issue of any rash attempt he might make to

recover her, when he discovered that she was detained by Mahomet.

Her attendants in vain endeavoured to dispel the despairing gloom that beclouded Zemyra's countenance ; but their topics of consolation were disgusting to her, and having dismissed them, she found the greatest relief in solitude.

Thus passed heavily the first day of her imprisonment, and the only alleviation of her sorrows was the absence of Mahomet, whom she had not yet seen, and of whose appearance she was in continual fear. In the anticipation of this dreaded event she spent the whole of the day, like the person with a sharp sword suspended over his head ; and when the hour of rest arrived, the balm of harassed nature, she pressed a sleepless pillow during the long hours of a tedious night.

When

When the voice of the iman sounded the hour of morning prayer, Zemyra did not hesitate to join in the devotions of the Mussulmans. Her prayers were offered to the God of her fathers, while the orisons of the Turks ascended to Allah. She arose from her devotions, reassured of the continuance of his protecting providence, and was enabled to gather consolation in her present distress by reflecting upon her former difficulties.

When, at the destruction of Athens, the vengeance of Mahomet had been poured out upon her devoted family, and he vowed to exterminate the last branch of that unfortunate stock, she had been preserved by the then more eligible alternative of being sold as a slave, and transported into Asia. At the capture of Smyrna she was exposed to the savage brutality of a Turkish soldier, but had been saved by the timely

F 5 . . . interposition

interposition of him who became to her more than parents or brethren, and whose love she prized above her existence. In Italy her being forced away by the prince of Parma had been the means of her finding her valued but hapless friends, the count and countess of Eldenfeldt; and her subsequent misfortune, in falling again into her ravisher's power, was the cause of her joyful though unexpected and unlooked-for meeting with her loved Castriot, and the destruction of her persecutor.

Consoled by these reflections, she committed herself and her destiny to the gracious protection of Heaven; and while she resolved to neglect no opportunity that might occur of extricating herself from her dreaded situation, she firmly trusted that the Power which had so frequently delivered her from imminent peril would not desert her in the present distress, but deliver her from it,

it, and bring good out of the threatening evil.

CHAPTER VI.

—————“ Oh ! but man, proud man !
Drest in a little brief authority,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heav’n,
As make the angels weep.”

“ AMURATH the Second, son of the most mighty lord Mahomet Chan, by the favour of Allah and the blessing of his prophet, king of the kings of the whole world, sultan of Asia and Europe, prince of the holy cities of Mecca and Jerusalem, lord of the ocean, and vicegerent of Allah upon earth, unto Scanderbeg, viceroy of the Epirots and Albanians, greeting.”

Such

Such was the pompous preamble to the letter which the herald of the sultan delivered to Castriot shortly after the departure of Rudolph to Croia, and while the prince and Alexis were engaged in a consultation on the means to be pursued for the discovery whether Zemyna had been conveyed to the Turkish camp.

Castriot perused in astonishment the letter of the sultan, as he least expected the proposal of an amicable termination of hostilities to proceed from him. After the high sounding display of the sultan's titles, the letter went on to declare the regard which Amurath yet entertained for Iskanderbeg, though he, in despite of the former friendship and numerous favours of his patron, had broken out into open rebellion against his rightful lord; and notwithstanding such flagrant conduct deserved the severest punishment, he was willing to withhold his vengeance

vengeance midway, and on Iskander's repentance would receive him again to his favour. He therefore proposed, as the terms of accommodation, that Castriot should disband his army, and admit Mahometan troops into the garrisons of Epirus; that all prisoners taken on either side should be exchanged; and that, among others, Amurath should restore the prince's intended bride, who had been taken in the last night's assault. That on these conditions being fulfilled, the sultan would allow Castriot to possess the kingdom of Epirus Proper, as tributary to Amurath, while the province of Albania should be conferred on the duke of Albania, who had already made his peace with the sultan.

Castriot having read these contents of the letter, and observed that the imperial seal of Amurath was officially affixed to it, submitted it to the perusal of Alexis, who having also perused it, said—“This clears

clears every doubt of the villainy of Moneses and the misfortunes of the princess. But what answer do you intend to dispatch to these demands of the sultan?"

"What is your counsel?" asked Castriot.

"The decided rejection of the proposed terms."

"Even so," rejoined the prince, with quickness, and indignantly. "Is it not enough that Amurath should treat me as his vassal, but that he would divide my dominions with that arch-traitor? Dearest of women! best beloved Zemysra! much as my heart bleeds to leave thee in the power of that despot, Mahomet; I know thine heroic soul would rather be exposed to his coward malice, than thy Castriot should betray the trust Epirus has confided to him, or embitter the happiness which may yet be reserved, by effecting thy deliverance at the expense of his integrity."

The

The answer of the prince to the sultan's letter commenced as follows:—
“The soldier of Christ, George, prince of Albania and all Epirus, to Amurath the Second, sultan of the Turks, greeting,” &c.

After this introduction, Castriot proceeded to disclaim peremptorily any authority arrogated by Amurath, whose claims to sovereignty over Epirus, founded in murder and usurpation, were totally invalid and indefensible. He further said, that although the sultan had gained Sfetigrade by treachery, he was unable to push his conquests, and the city of Croia had baffled his greatest and continued efforts; and that since the victories of the sultan and his immense host had been limited to the capture of a frontier town, and carrying off a defenceless female in the silence of night, he had no reason to dread his vengeance, nor tremble at his future exploits. For the

the liberation of his destined bride, he would readily give up the prisoners he had made, and in addition, a ransom worthy of a monarch; but though his life would be a blank without her, never, even for her deliverance, would he swerve from the trust reposed in him by his countrymen, but continue still their faithful champion and general, whilst he had nerves to wield his sword, or as long as there remained an enemy to conquer.

He concluded by indignantly protesting against entering into a treaty upon any other footing than upon the terms of equality, monarch with monarch; but repeated his offer of a ransom to any amount, however enormous, for the princess of Athens.

On the return of the herald, Mahomet having read the indignant reply of Castriot,

couch, the image of wan despair. The attendants, at a motion of his hand, left the tent, and Zemyra was left without the small assurance which the presence of a female would give her.

"Doubtless," said Mahomet, "the daughter of Ducaris reckons Mahomet her greatest enemy: but who betrayed her to his power?—her friend, the general of her future bridegroom, the *faithful duke of Albania*."

"The duke of Albania my betrayer!" repeated Zemyra, in accents of unfeigned astonishment.

"Even so," replied Mahomet; "and when thy freedom was proffered to thy lukewarm lover, he rejected it with disdain."

"The words of deceit, still less than the mandates of oppression, become the lips of the mighty," rejoined the princess. "The heart of Castriot is the throne of truth and constancy."

"Behold

"Behold then my proofs!" exclaimed Mahomet, presenting the reply which the messenger who returned with the Turkish herald brought from the prince, "and judge between the generosity of Mahomet and the constancy of Castriot."

Zemyra traced with eagerness the loved characters; and, dejected as she had before been, the unchanging ardour of her lover's affection, and the nobility of sentiment contained in the letter, inspired her with congenial feelings; and the means that Mahomet took to embitter her existence, by exasperating her against the prince, tended to give her, if possible, a more exalted opinion of him than she before possessed.

Perceiving himself foiled in the attempt of placing the conduct of Castriot in an unfavourable light, he pursued another plan to make her captivity irksome.

This

This, he hoped and expected, she would quickly do, as he ardently wished to bring the war to a termination. He perceived that the fast declining health of the sultan almost precluded the possibility of his recovery, and he greatly feared lest such an event as his father's death should take place at a distance so remote from the metropolis. His brother Achmet possessed the hearts of the soldiery, as his liberality of disposition and frank carriage had made him no less a favourite, than the overbearing manners and tyrannical conduct of Mahomet had rendered him the object of aversion to his subjects in general. Sensible of this, he was impatient to return to the seat of empire, to secure the succession by his favourite method—compulsion.

In the prospect of her protracted captivity, Zemyra saw the distant beams of hope breaking through the beclouded vista

vista of her present prospects. As the evil day was at a remote period, she persuaded herself that some favourable event would transpire in the interval to release her from the power of her princely jailor.

CHAPTER VII.

Joy, joy, I see, confess'd from every eye;
 Your limbs tread vigorous, and your breasts beat high.
 Thin tho' our ranks, though scanty be our bands,
 Bold are our hearts, and nervous are our bands.
 With us truth, justice, fame, and freedom close,
 Each singly equal to a host of foes.

HAVING learnt from count Rudolph, that the loss sustained by the governor's forces in the assault was inconsiderable, and therefore required no reinforcement, Castriot, after revolving in his perturbed mind a thousand various plans for Zemysra's deliverance, determined to make another attack upon the Turkish camp. His purpose was to cut his way by plain

force

force to the tent of Mahomet, and bear away his betrothed princess in spite of all opposition.

He communicated his intention to Alexis, who, although he doubted the feasibility of the enterprise, was unwilling to dissuade him from it, as his friend's happiness so greatly depended upon its success. He therefore acquiesced in Castriot's determination, who was more disposed to be sanguine in his hopes, as he had, in his last attack, almost penetrated to the tent of Amurath himself, which was situated in the very centre of the camp.

The commands of the prince were received with enthusiastic ardour by the officers of the whole army, to many of whom Zemyra was personally known, who revered her gentle virtues, and would eagerly assist in chastising her oppressor; while the rest of the troops, who heard

with indignation the treachery of the recreant duke of Albania and his perfidious conduct to Zemyra, were loud in their demands to be instantly led against the Turks, whose immense host they would willingly brave in open day, to revenge the wrong offered to their heroic leader in the person of his future bride.

Like the fierce lioness, whose den the hunters have robbed of her hungry offspring while she scoured the forest in search of prey, prowls round their dwelling, waiting the moment of revenge, Castriot, in the silence of midnight, marshalled his troops at the Turkish entrenchments. He here divided his army into two bodies of four thousand each, one of which he detached to attack the southern quarter of the camp, under the command of Alexis and prince Hamee, who had that day arrived from the northern provinces with fresh troops. With
the

the other, led by himself and count Randolph, having forced the eastern entrenchments, he purposed to join the forces of Alexis and Hamesa at the imperial tent.

Elated with his former success, and fired with the hope of rescuing his beloved, the prince did not believe this design impracticable, as he calculated that the Mahometan troops, buried in sleep, would present a feeble resistance at first, and would be unable to rally until too late to make any effectual opposition.

After having waited the appointed time for Alexis to gain their purposed point of attack, the impatient prince gave the signal to his soldiers. It was obeyed with promptitude, and Castriot, having gained the top of the entrenchment, was quickly followed by his eager followers.

G 3

Count

Count Rudolph began the work of death. A sentinel, perceiving the enemy, fled to give the alarm; but his flight was arrested by that chieftain, who, springing after him, laid him dead at his feet.

While the prince was forming his troops, who had now all crossed the ditch, the alarm had been spread by the other sentinels, and a strong body of Turks advanced against the Epirots. Four cohorts, of one thousand men in each, had been appointed to remain under arms during the night, and to form an immense patrol in the four divisions of the camp.

Mahomet had taken this precaution, as he had greater reason than ever for expecting an attack from the Epirot prince, since he had assumed such a decided tone in the negotiations of the preceding day.

In

In this supposition he was confirmed, by the coincidence of Moneses, who asserted that Castriot would not have rejected the offer of Zemnyra's release, unless he entertained some hope of effecting it by other means.

He therefore stationed the troops before mentioned, with instructions to the several bashaws who commanded them, to unite their forces in one body at a given signal, if events should transpire to render such an arrangement necessary.

Mahomet, in issuing these orders, had complied in part with the directions of his aged and timid father, who stood in such dread of Castriot's nocturnal irruptions, that he would willingly have kept the whole host under arms during the night. But this counsel Mahomet disdained to follow, as he scorned to stand, in such visible dread of a petty marauder,

der, as he affected to considered Castrict.

Undismayed at the sudden appearance of this armed force, where he expected to meet an unguarded enemy, Castrict made the first onset, when the bashaw Sindah gave the signal for the other divisions to join his troops.

This was quickly done by Hassun-beg, who commanded in the northern quarter; but the cohorts of the western and southern divisions were occupied in the attempt to repel the attacks of Alexis and Hamesa, who had there effected a lodgement within the interior entrenchment.

Castrict, having a superiority of numbers, and pushing forward with resistless impetuosity, soon compelled Sindah to retreat towards the centre. Like fortune attended the efforts of the prince's friend

friend and kinsman on the other side: the opposition there was more feeble than that which Castriot had experienced.

Ogli, a favourite eunuch of the sultan, had the command of one of the thousands, and was closely pressed by Hame-sa, who was delighted to be again engaged in the active operations of war.

The pusillanimous eunuch, whose abilities were much better calculated to command the mutes and slaves of the seraglio than to lead troops to battle, soon retreated, and the soldiers of the bashaw Rustan, the fourth chieftain, followed their comrades' example, and retired among the tents. Here they maintained a skirmishing engagement, although the Epirots still gained ground.

The sleeping soldiers were now aroused, and hurry and alarm prevailed throughout the camp. The soldiers, who

all dreaded Castriot, from the firm belief which they entertained that he was in alliance with an evil genius, and that he possessed a talisman which made him invincible, repaired to their duty with evident reluctance.

Sindah, perceiving his utmost efforts to repel the Epirot chief entirely fruitless, dispatched a janizary to Mahomet, acquainting him that the enemy had attacked the encampment in different places, and that their numbers considerably exceeded those of himself and the chieftains appointed to co-operate with him.

When Castriot perceived his foes retreating, he pressed forwards, and shouted the signal of his dreadful purpose—
“Blade and Brand!” The echoes of this war-cry from his own troops were repeated by those of Alexis and Hamesa from the opposite quarter.

Seizing

Seizing a torch from the hands of a soldier, the impetuous prince rushed into the deserted tent of a chieftain, whose costly and airy drapery was quickly inflamed by the fires of the torch. The cry of the "*Blade and Brand!*" was the watchword for the conflagration of the camp: the example of their chief was followed by all his soldiers who bore torches, and the destructive element rapidly spread through the whole eastern camp.

The form of Castriot, moving amidst the flames of the burning tents, appeared like the genius of fire; his polished armour and weapons irradiated, and the waving plumes of his helmet flashed like beams of dazzling light, while he seemed to command the elements themselves; the wind, having arisen from the north, drove the flames towards the centre of the camp.

Whilst the dreadful confusion and tumult occasioned by the conflagration spread in all directions, the voice of Mahomet was heard execrating the cowardice of his generals and troops; while Castriot urged his soldiers by his animating voice and gestures to overcome the few obstacles that intervened between them and their grand object—the imperial pavilion.

To guard its sacred precincts, which the troops of Alexis and Hamesa had approached nearer than those of Castriot, in the opposite direction, Mahomet, with his hastily-armed janizaries, drove back the retreating troops of Ogli and Rustan, who were thus partly compelled and partly encouraged again to face the enemy. With this reinforcement the Epirots in their turn were compelled to retreat, though nobly, and with their faces to the foe.

Driven

Driven back to the lines, they posted themselves behind a projecting angle, and there defied the attacks of Mahomet, who, having made repeated attempts to dislodge and drive them across the trench, at length desisted, and having left the troops to keep them in check, he hastened to the other quarter, where Castriot had gained more ground than his chieftains had lost.

While the voice of Mahomet was heard, the Turkish chiefs were enabled to make the soldiers stand firmly to their weapons; but when he was engaged at a distance, they no longer opposed the Epirots with courage, but retreated as though their strength withered before the enemy.

The imperial pavilion of Amurath, and the tent of Mahomet, situated in the centre, were divided from the rest of the camp by a trench and lines. Here were

were also the pavilions in which the divan was held, and where justice was daily administered, and a splendid suite of tents formed a seraglio.

Along the lines of this inclosure a guard of janizaries patrolled night and day. The Turks had been driven before the conquering arms of Castriot to the brink of the second entrenchment, when Mahomet arrived from the western division.

Breathless, and fired with indignation, that prince returned to oppose Castriot, and beheld his troops formed around the imperial inclosure. Here they seemed to have acquired new courage, and made a successful stand against the Epirot chieftain and his brave soldiers.

The whole body of the Mahometans were now in arms, and the Epirots must have been completely and immediately surrounded;

surrounded; but the flames, which spread rapidly along the eastern quarter towards the south, not only protected Castriot's forces on that side, but occupied the attention of great part of the army in attempts to stop its ravages.

Indignant that the mighty host of Amurath, the collected armies of the Turkish empire, should be thus braved by a petty chieftain, at the head of a handful of men, Mahomet commanded his troops to follow him at the peril of his direst vengeance, and advanced with impetuosity against the Epirot chieftain.

Castriot, perceiving the furious approach of the Turkish prince, averted his destructive blade from the meaner prey on which he poured his vengeance, and bent his eager steps to the spot where the presence of Mahomet rolled back the tide of success which had before borne

bore him triumphantly and rapidly towards the haven of his desires.

Mahomet, who was by no means deficient in personal courage, did not await the attack of his foe, but aimed a furious stroke of his cimeter at the heron-plumed crest of the Epirot chief. This Castriot dexterously avoided, and was about to return it, when the weapons of his numerous guards were raised to defend their prince.

The Christian warrior retreated a few steps, but not before his resistless arm had inflicted on two of Mahomet's foremost janizaries the penalty of their rashness.

Overpowered by the numbers whom the dread of Mahomet now inspired with factitious courage, Castriot was retreating from the dangerous position he had gained,

gained, when the well-known shouts of his soldiers from the western quarter announced their near approach to the proposed point of rendezvous.

Trusting to the inferior numbers of Alexis and Hanesa, Mahomet deemed them secure in their strong position as his prisoners, being held in check by the troops of Ogli and Rustan, with the addition of other forces from the adjoining parts of the camp.

In this expectation the Turkish commander was completely disappointed. Far from being compelled to remain as prisoners, they quickly sallied from their retreat behind the angle, and once more drove the forces who were left to guard them towards the centre.

Elated by the triumphant acclamations of his friends, the impatient prince, pointing to the imperial tents, urged his troops

troops towards that object, conspicuous by its lofty elevation, and the glare of the lamps which burnt before it continually.

As he rushed impetuously onwards, it was his fate to encounter Mahomet, who determined now to take signal vengeance upon this hated foe, and at once terminate a contest which had tarnished the glories of his father's conquests, and covered himself with dishonour.

Urged by a similar motive, Castriot, who observed that the presence of Mahomet was the very soul of his host, anticipated the attack of that chief, and springing upon him with an active bound, he aimed a ponderous blow at the glittering turban of his foe. The splendidly-ornamented folds of which it was composed broke the force of the stroke, but enough of it remained to intimidate and terrify Mahomet, who recoiled

recoiled from the irresistible vengeance of Castriot.

Hassan-beg, perceiving the Epirot prince preparing to follow up this advantage by successive blows, directed a stroke of his cimeter from behind at the warrior's head. The weapon glanced from his polished helmet, but descending on his shoulder, penetrated the flesh, and the blood followed in copious streams.

Regardless of his wound, the undaunted prince still dealt destruction amidst the files of the Moslem host. Though the sabres of Castriot and his intrepid followers thinned the successive ranks that opposed their progress, the constant supply of fresh troops from the cohorts of that innumerable host was like the rapid succession of the waves of the ocean.

Castriot, perceiving it vain to contend with such vast numbers, resolved reluctantly

reluctantly to abandon his design. The lives of his faithful subjects were too highly prized by him to be fruitlessly squandered in a vain attempt to penetrate a host which was now on its guard in every direction. He therefore ordered the signal for a retreat to be sounded, and it was obeyed with order and precision.

The Turks, perceiving their advantage, pressed eagerly forwards to prevent the escape of the foe, whom they now thought entangled in the toils. The conflict now raged with redoubled fury; but the Epirots still maintained good order in their retreat, and reached the entrenchments.

Here, to the indescribable alarm of his faithful soldiers, their prince, faint with the loss of blood, dropped the reins, and would have fallen from his steed, had not count Rudolph, who stood near him, supported

supported him in his arms while a litter was hastily formed, and he was borne pale and inanimate to the rear.

Count Rudolph now assumed the command, and after a desperate contest, succeeded in recrossing the entrenchments. Here Alexis and Hamesa greatly assisted the retreat, having also heard and obeyed the signal of the prince, after contributing to the slaughter and confusion of the Turkish host.

These chieftains learnt with deep sorrow the state of their beloved prince, and hastened the return to the mountain-camp, where the surgeon applied the necessary restoratives, and on examining the wound, pronounced it far from dangerous, not affording the slightest cause for alarm, and that its worst consequence would be the temporary confinement of the patient. An opiate was administered after the wound was dressed, and the fatigues

fatigues and cares of Contrast were soon hushed in repose.

Rejoicing at the surgeon's report, favourable even beyond their hopes, the Epirot chieftains assembled to consult on their future operations.

Count Rudolph expressed his apprehensions that the Turks, convinced of the prince's inability to head his troops, would attack the camp, and counselled an immediate removal further into the recesses of the mountains.

To this the bold Hamesa strongly objected as savouring of cowardice, but the reply of Alexis quickly removed his objection.

The Byzantine hero was well aware of their inferior numbers, and he doubted their ability to oppose an effectual resistance to such an unnumbered host.

He

He knew that the presence of Castriot was the terror of the Moslem troops—the nerve of his army, and the palladium of his kingdom. He had seen that no enterprise was too great—no attempt too arduous, for his soldiers to undertake when led by their successful chief. He had also beheld the dread with which his foes almost invariably shrank from his terrible arm.

Mighty as was the prowess of Castriot, the superstition of the Turks clothed him with supernatural energies; and the name of the awful angel Azrael scarcely possessed more appalling powers than did that of the irresistible hero of Epirus.

It was therefore determined by the chiefs to strike their tents with the morning's dawn, to which measure the prince, on awakening from a refreshing repose,

“Y...”

repose, gave his assent, and the design was accordingly put into execution without delay.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wer't not better
That I did suit me all points like a man—
A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,
A boar-spear in my hand?

WHILE her heroic lover was stretched on the couch of sickness, the unfortunate princess of Athens was passing the heavy hours of the eventful night in agony of soul. She had been awakened by the mingled sounds of tumult and terror, which suddenly broke the dead silence that before reigned throughout the camp.

The wild exclamations that burst

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upon

upon her affrighted ear of—"The camp is in flames!" were mingled with the groans of the wounded, the shouts of the combatants, the appalling sound of deep-rolling drums and hoarsely-braying trumpets, and the neighing and trampling of war-horses.

Amidst the terrible confusion that prevailed on all sides, the gentle heart of Zemyra sunk within her, and the fatal night when her native Athens fell a prey to the vengeance of Mahomet rose to her bewildered imagination in all its horrid colours. She endeavoured to gain intelligence of the cause of this wild uproar by summoning her attendants; but they had fled from the tent which formed her anti-chamber on the cry of "fire!" being heard.

She retired to the solitude and darkness of her own apartment in intolerable suspense,

suspense, and sunk upon the couch in fearful anticipation of new evils.

Suddenly a thought, as if inspired by Heaven, flashed upon her mind. Perceiving herself unguarded by the vigilance of her attendants, she formed the resolution of attempting an escape from the camp; and recollecting having observed the dress of an eunuch lying in the outer apartment during the day, she resolved to put her design into instant execution by assuming that disguise.

Cautiously she explored the apartment, and searched the spot where she had seen it carelessly lying. What a chilling bolt of disappointment thrilled through her heart when she found it was removed! The warm hopes with which she commenced her undertaking were changed to despondence, and she was ready to retire and resign the enter-

terprise, when the explosion of a distant magazine, which had been inflamed in the conflagration, caused a flash of light to penetrate the tent-door, and the eager eye of Zemyra discovered the highly-prized habiliments suspended near the door.

She eagerly seized them as the talisman of her happiness and safety, and having put them on over her own slight garments, she felt as confident of her safe escape as if already without the bounds of the Turkish encampment: having conquered this first difficulty, she seemed to consider the many remaining obstacles she had yet to encounter as easily to be surmounted.

Inspired with hope, Zemyra, assuming as intrepid a carriage as she could, issued from the tent, and gained the space in front of the sultan's pavilion uninterrupted.

rupted. There the blaze of the lamps, which were continually burning, warned her to retire behind a tent, to avoid the observation of a crowd of people whom she saw advancing into the area.

From her obscure situation she saw the inanimate form of her oppressor borne between his soldiers, while the alarmed attendants ran wildly towards the sultan's tent. She trembled at the sight; but being near the gate which divided the imperial enclosure from the camp, she embraced the opportunity of its being unguarded, the sentinels having left their posts in dismay.

She now perceived the towers of Croia by the light of the burning camp, and attempted to direct her steps to the quarter nearest to them: but here the conflagration compelled her to retreat towards the opposite direction.

She passed through the avenues of the camp unheeded, the chieftains and the troops being too much occupied in the tumultuous conflict of that eventful night to notice the motions of a despised eunuch, who appeared to be avoiding the terrors of war in the obscurest corners.

Zemyra, favoured by this disguise, gained the lines in safety. Here she was challenged by a sentinel, when, giving herself up for lost, she ran with all the speed her faltering feet possessed, and gained the opposite side of the entrenchment through a breach made by part of the troops of Alexis, who had just retreated, in obedience to the signal of their prince.

She heard the soldier exclaim, as she ran, that if she wished to run into the lion's den, he would not stop him to prevent it—he would soon be in the enemy's power,

power, if he continued to run in that direction.

These words of the sentinel reassured the alarmed princess, by convincing her how well the disguise protected her, and by informing her that the Epirot forces were near. In the hope of falling in with them, she pressed eagerly forwards in the same direction, as nearly as she could guess, and soon was beyond the precincts of the encampment.

The ground which she now traversed became covered with wood, and she perceived that the Epirots must have diverged from their former track, as the sounds which at first had guided her were heard no more.

In the fond expectation of arriving at her lover's camp, or of encountering some Epirot troops, the trembling princess continued to proceed. Often she

stopped to listen, fancying she heard distant voices of soldiers, when the wind sighed amidst the trees of the forest. Frequently she thought she discovered the watchfires of the camp in the twinklings of a star seen through the foliage.

Amidst these unaccustomed hardships, the certainty of having escaped greater and unknown evils from the power of Mahomet, supported her spirits in a situation whose terrors and difficulties would have appalled stouter hearts than are usually found in a soft feminine bosom. But what efforts will not a virtuous female make to fly from the dangers that continually threaten whilst in the toils of a brutal tyrant! The sorrows of Zemyra were comparative happiness; lesser evils were swallowed up in the superior bliss of being safe from the persecutions of Mahomet.

The beams of morning at length
smiled

smiled upon the wanderer; and discovered the stupendous scenery by which she was surrounded. Huge and precipitous mountains rose almost perpendicularly, pointing their bare summits to the clouds; deeply-shaded woods clothed the sides, and a torrent, whose rocky channel was supplied from their fountains, murmur'd through the centre of the glen, heard, but unseen, amidst concealing sedges.

The repose of the scene was consoling to Zemyra's soul, which, harassed in situations of tumult and destruction, enjoyed with double zest the peaceful contrast of this romantic solitude. Her bosoms ascended to the Giver of all good, and she felt confident that the power who had delivered her from repeated dangers would still uphold and protect her from evil.

In this assurance she climbed an eminence, whence she thought the towers

of Croia might be visible; but nothing met her view but a succession of hills and woods, and it seemed scarcely credible that she had wandered in a few hours to a region so sequestered. She could almost suppose that an invisible power had transported her from the abodes of slaughter and tumults to scenes of innocence, tranquillity, and content.

As the fair wanderer advanced along the valley, she approached a cottage, whose lowly thatch was protected by the foliage of a lofty beech. The door stood invitingly open, and the appearance of the hut, internal and external, bore tokens of desertion. The few articles of rude furniture that remained lay carelessly scattered in the floor, as if the occupiers had fled in such haste as prevented their removal or concealment.

Having secured the door, she sought a temporary repose on a rustic bench,
and

and fatigue overcoming her apprehensions, she quickly forgot her cares in profound sleep.

She arose greatly refreshed from the rough pallet, and again commenced her uncertain journey, supporting her steps by a short hunting spear which she found in the deserted cottage. A few wild fruits, and a draught of crystal water, pure from its natural basin, constituted a frugal repast, and with recruited strength and renovated spirits she pursued her toilsome route, in the direction which she fondly hoped would quickly bring her to the haven of rest—the camp of her hero.

She mounted hill after hill, expecting each would be the last that intervened between her and the object of her search, but was doomed to experience repeated disappointments.

With trembling apprehension she beheld the sun declining towards the regions of the west, and shrank with horror at the thought of again braving the terrors of night amidst the solitary wilds by which she saw herself surrounded.

Ready to sink beneath the heart oppressing effects of hope deferred, and the anticipation of future and aggravated dangers, she at length discovered what appeared a lately-trodden path, winding along the side of a heathy hill, and eagerly pursued it, in the hope that it might lead to some human habitation.

She had not proceeded far before the declivity became so great, that it was with difficulty she kept her footing. The valley below was contracted into a narrow glen, through which a torrent was heard foaming over the impediments which fell from the precipices and obstructed its course.

Zemyra's

Zemyra's progress here seemed insurmountably impeded by two beetling rocks rising perpendicularly on either side of the valley. Gloomy indeed were her reflections in this place of dreadful sublimity, where nature reigned in her most savage aspect: nothing interrupted the solitude but the roaring of the torrent darkly rushing along the profound abyss; and the sun had just disappeared behind the precipitous crags, leaving the valley enveloped in sombre shadow, and seeming to exclude her from light and hope.

She still pursued the path, which passed close beneath the threatening precipice, and on turning a sharp projecting rock she found herself upon one extremity of a rudely-formed bridge, composed of huge trees thrown across the chasm.

Here a beautifully wooded vale lay spread

spread at her feet, and richly gilded by the bright beams of the setting sun, formed a strong contrast to the gloomy dell from whence the hapless Zemyra had just emerged. But the object that was more delightful to the eyes of the wanderer than the richest landscapes that poets could feign or painters delineate, was the sight of her Castriot's camp, whose white tents she discerned among the crags and dingles of the opposite hill.

How buoyant are the spirits of youth! Zemyra was at once elevated from despondency to joy, and, regardless of the rugged track that still intervened, she bounded across the bridge, and with the assistance of her hunting spear, surmounted the difficulties of the way with strength and perseverance becoming her masculine attire.

A wooded eminence now hid the camp

camp from her view; but having conquered this, Zemyra perceived the tents of the Epirots immediately below, whilst the shades of fast approaching twilight obscured the valley beneath.

She hesitated for a moment while she contemplated with delight the long-sought encampment, which now was within her immediate reach. She was about to emerge from the embowering shade of the grove, when she beheld a body of Turks rush from among the trees, and overwhelming the sentinels, enter the precincts of the camp, which was only separated by a small space from the verge of the wood.

With perturbed feelings Zemyra beheld their progress opposed by the single arm of her heroic lover. The wounded prince had awakened refreshed from a sound sleep, when the clashing of weapons near his tent burst upon his ear.

Regardless

Regardless of the remonstrances of his attendants, he hastily threw on a military cloak, and seizing his trusty sabre, he rushed upon the unexpected foe.

Zemyra, from her concealed situation, saw him prostrate two at his feet, when the third who attacked him being disarmed, clasped his knees, and in eager despair besought him in pity to spare his life.

The generous prince arrested the sword about to descend upon his enemy, and this moment of mercy did the chief of the ambush seize to aim a blow from behind at the head of Castriot.

The agonized Zemyra beheld the meditated stroke, and obeying the impulse of her heart, which left her no time for feminine fears, she firmly grasped her hunting spear, and with the rapidity of an

an arrow flew from her place of concealment.

The Turk had already lifted his weapon with determined coolness, and the life of Castriot hung upon a thread, when, with all her collected strength, Zemyra plunged the spear into the warrior's side.

Prone fell the wounded chief, and Castriot beheld the imminent danger he had escaped, by the timely interposition of a stranger's weapon.

Exhausted with the effort, and oppressed with varied sensations, Zemyra sunk senseless upon the ground. Castriot commanded her to be removed into his pavilion, though unconscious of her sex, and of her claims to his care: but before this command could be obeyed by the soldiers who now hastened from all parts of the camp to the assistance of their

their prince, the Turks had seized and borne the unconscious Zemyra into the woods as their prisoner, finding it in vain to attempt any further mischief against the Epirots.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Is it not glorious
Thus to appal the bold, meet force with fury,
And push yon torrent back, till every wave
Flee to its fountain ?”

WHEN Mahomet discovered the flight of Zemyra, his rage was unbounded, and the attendants and guards of the women’s apartments felt the effects of his unbridled fury.

While the camp was yet in the greatest disorder from the recent attack of the Epirots, he dispatched troops in every direction to arrest the flight of the fair fugitive. The disguise which had favoured

voured her escape was discovered, and the furious prince promised a large reward to the soldier who should bring back the captive.

The most diligent search was made in vain, Zemyra having accidentally pursued such an unfrequented route as effectually secured her from her enemies' pursuit.

The suggestions of Moneses at length somewhat allayed the fury of Mahomet. He advised an immediate attack to be made upon the Epirot camp, where he would encounter a feeble resistance from soldiers whose darling chief could no longer appear at their head; if Zemyra had taken refuge with her lover, he would again have her in his power, or if she had escaped to Creia, that city would soon fall a prey to his victorious arms.

Mahomet

Mahomet readily believed the arguments of Moneses, congenial as they were to his own wishes; and a strong body of horse and foot was immediately put in motion to assail the camp of the wounded prince, which he commanded in person.

Had not his purpose been frustrated by the flight of the princess of Athens, Mahomet had resolved to wreak on her defenceless person the vengeance which he feared to execute on her lover, and pierce the heart of Castriot through her whom he prized above life.

Ambition was now the weakest motive that influenced the actions of Mahomet; and had it been possible for him to have gained undisturbed possession of the dominions of Epirus without being revenged on Castriot and the hated daughter of Ducaris, he would have rejected the terms with disdain.

Burning.

Burning with desire of vengeance, he led his army towards the mountains, guided to the object of his expedition by the recreant duke of Albania.

On his approaching the camp, at the close of the day, he detached a party of infantry to ascend by a circuitous path through the woods, with instructions to reconnoitre the position of the enemy, and to attack them, should they surprise them unprepared for resistance.

In pursuance of these instructions, the sanjak who led the party, having proceeded with the greatest caution, succeeded in reaching the verge of the wood unperceived: from thence he observed that the extremity of the camp was slightly guarded, and he instantly rushed into the encampment, as has been before seen.

The courage of Zemyra protected the life

life of her hero, but was fatal to her own liberty. One of the soldiers instantly recognized the eunuch for whom prince Mahomet had promised such a large reward, and at the peril of his life he seized the hapless princess, and with his comrades effected a speedy retreat into their place of ambush.

Fearful of surprise from unseen numbers, the Epirot chieftain would not permit his troops to pursue the foe into the woods; yet he felt great regret that he could not repay his debt of gratitude to the mysterious youth to whose timely interposition he owed his life. How would his heart have bled to know that the lovely being whom he held most dear had exposed herself to the deadly cimeters of the Turks for his safety, and was again in the hated power of Mahomet!

But this exquisite misery was spared him, nor did Zemyra return to a consciousness

sciousness of her situation till she was placed on a splendid sofa in the tent of her imperial oppressor, whither he had ordered her to be conveyed, as soon as the grateful intelligence of her being once more his captive was communicated to him.

The exulting prince hailed this un-hoped-for event as an omen of future success, and he anticipated, with renewed confidence, the consummation of his vengeance on the unfortunate princess of Athens and her hated lover.

A strong body of cavalry, under the command of the traitorous Moneses, was the escort of Zemyra to her former dreaded prison, and that chieftain had received the strictest orders from Mahomet to observe every precaution to prevent a second escape of his intended victim.

The

The Turkish host was now spread over the plain that stretched from the mountain on whose acclivity Castriot had encamped. That prince, whose vigilance had been alarmed by the ambuscade, immediately dispatched scouts to reconnoitre the neighbouring tracts, and was thus apprised of the enemy's approach before they entered the plain.

On receiving this intelligence, he made the most judicious preparations for the ensuing conflict, which the impatient Mahomet commenced with the first beams of morning, by leading in person his infantry up the hill, with an intent to storm the Epirot's camp.

This attempt was rendered totally abortive by the firmness and courage of the soldiers of Castriot; and when the Turks beheld the lofty plume of that hero, towering over the helmets of his troops—when they saw the lightning,

flash of his sabre, all their superstitious fears appeared realized.

Thrice was the attack renewed by the raging Mahomet; and when his collected numbers were repulsed a fourth time, he was almost ready to fall into the opinion of his subjects, that his foe was in league with and protected by the evil genii, whose chief delight was to thwart the designs of the followers of the true prophet. How else could the chief, whom he had known a few hours since borne from the field, apparently mortally wounded, so quickly rise to check his career in the path of victory?

Urged by the united voices of Hame-sa and Alexis, and perceiving the ardent desire of his army to pursue the advantage he had gained, Castriot suffered his prudence to be overcome, and led his troops against the retreating Turks into the plain.

This

This movement was beyond the hopes of Mahomet, who exclaimed to his bashaws that the hour of vengeance was at length arrived.—“Dearly shall the proud usurper rue his transient triumph!”

He accordingly extended his line, and ordering the heavy cavalry to be stationed at each extremity, presented a formidable front to the comparatively small band of Albanian heroes.

The prince now perceived and regretted the rashness of his conduct: but it was too late to retreat—the conflict was become general, and raged with desperate fury on both sides. The fortune of Castriot, and the bravery of his troops (each individual contending like an heroic chieftain, and every chief battling as if the issue of the day depended on his individual prowess) formed a balance against the numbers of Mahomet, and the superiority of his cavalry.

Regardless of his wound, which at a less eventful crisis would have confined him to his tent, Castriot was seen in every part of the field; while, at his side, Alexis, like his guardian angel, constantly attended, to ward off the blow aimed at the friend of his soul, the champion of Epirus.

Success, which had long appeared doubtful, now evidently hung over the banners of the Moslem host. Mahomet, by a sudden manœuvre, had flanked the Epirots on both sides; prince Hamesa, who had attempted to repulse the inroads of the cavalry, was borne to the rear, desperately wounded; count Rudolph quickly followed him, covered with blood and numerous wounds.

These advantages of the Turks were dearly purchased; but the unrelenting Mahomet regarded little the sacrifice of the bashaw or the janizary, the sanjak or

or the spahi, if their corses advanced him one step further in the road to vengeance and ambition.

All appeared now lost. The Turkish hosts had completely surrounded their devoted victims, and the glory of Epirus appeared about to be obscured for ever. Mahomet, like the deadly tiger, made his gradual approaches, before he would take the fatal spring upon his certain prey, resolved that Castriot should not elude his determined grasp.

That chief, perceiving nothing but a desperate effort could save his army from utter destruction, secured in the rear a safe retreat to the camp for his wounded friends and subjects, while he occupied the attention of the enemy in front. Then addressing a few words to his soldiers, he reminded them of their successful escape from the toils of the foe, when surrounded in their camp;

and being answered with ardour by those near him, he commanded them to assume the form of a wedge; and notwithstanding the remonstrances of Alexis, he placed himself in the face of danger at its point.

With a shout that was echoed from a thousand surrounding rocks, the gallant prince impetuously rushed towards that division of the Turkish army where the green standard announced the presence of Mahomet.

Amazed at the boldness of the foe, whom they had already looked upon as their prisoners, the foremost ranks made a feeble and brief resistance; but the phalanx of janizaries that surrounded their prince was a barrier of greater difficulty. Yet this could not long retard the progress of the Epirots, led on and animated to deeds of heroism by their fearless and intrepid chief; and after a

most sanguinary conflict, they penetrated the last rank of their formidable enemies.

Mahomet beheld, with mingled rage and disappointment, the daring enterprise of the hated Epirot. To retrieve, if possible, the advantage he had lost, he commanded the whole of his immense body of cavalry to intercept the retreat of the Epirots to the mountain.

Had success attended this evolution, the patriot bands must have fallen a sacrifice before the superior numbers of the Turks, and the freedom of Epirus would have been lost for ever.

But Victory, as if resolved to remunerate her favourite hero for her temporary dereliction of his banners, now crowned his arms with unparalleled honours; by a sudden and unexpected effort,

fort, he scaled a cliff deemed inaccessible by the Turks.

The Epirots, nimble as the chamois of their hills, followed their chief, and the whole band was quickly far out of the reach of the Mahometan cavalry. He now rallied in front of his encampment, and opposed an effectual resistance to the repeated attempts of Mahomet to dislodge him from his advantageous position.

The approach of night at length compelled the Turkish chief to desist from the further prosecution of his designs, which he resolved to renew with the earliest dawn of morning.

While the Turks submitted with manifest discontent to the necessity of spending the night amidst the inhospitable fastnesses of the mountain, the unwearyed

wearied. Castriot executed the plan in which he had before been foiled. His cavalry had been but little engaged in the conflict of the past day, and were therefore more competent to the daring enterprise in which he employed them.

Having entrusted his camp to the care of his friend Alexis, he proceeded with his Dricans (from which province this cavalry was principally selected), by the light afforded him by the countless orbs of a cloudless firmament. Through well-known paths they quickly reached the camp of the Turks, whose numerous tents were now deserted by the larger portion of their tenants.

It was nearly midnight, and the soldiers were buried in repose, dreaming of nothing less than Castriot, whom they supposed Mahomet had either totally vanquished, or was pursuing to the utmost confines of his kingdom.

The sentinels were therefore thinly scattered along the lines farthest from the city, and the Epirots encountered small opposition in crossing the entrenchments.

The alarm-drum roused the Turks from sleep, and the unwelcome intelligence spread through the camp, that their dreaded foe was forcing his irresistible way to the sultan's tent. This then was their rallying post, and all flocked eagerly to defend the person of their sick and aged emperor.

But Castriot thirsted not for the blood of Amurath, many as had been the wrongs he had suffered from the Turkish sultan. With the rapidity of lightning he rushed towards the tents which composed the seraglio of Mahomet. The eunuch guards were quickly overpowered, and the imperial harem was exposed to the mercy of the Epirots.

With

With a blazing torch, Castriot, eagerly searching for his beloved Zemyra, explored tent after tent in vain, when at length he discovered, sleeping on a couch to which he was chained, the very youth who had saved his life on the preceding day.

Gratitude impelled him to deliver his benefactor from the punishment which he concluded would be his fate for the bold action. With a mighty stroke of his sabre he severed the chain, when the youth, starting from the couch, discovered to the astonished and delighted prince his lost, lamented Zemyra!

"Where, where am I?" exclaimed the agitated princess, in hurried accents. "Can you be my Castriot?—No! no!—it was but a vision of delight, to mock the miserable, lost Zemyra!"

"It is no vision, no delusion," cried the prince, clasping her in his eager em-

brace; “but had transporting &clost. Thou art safe in the arms of thy Castriot, whence the collected power of Amurath's empire should fail to force thee. But the mornings are precious,” continued the chief, “and eveh will I be ian age, till my beloved is far from danger and these hated pavilions.”

The Turks were now collected, to oppose the retreat of the invading chief. They could have arrested the progress of a thunderbolt with equal success. He now fought for what he felt at that moment was dearer to him than his kingdom or existence.

The Mahometans, assembled in haste to revenge the bold assault of the Episcots, shrank from the withering brand of Castriot; and the troops, seconding their leader's prowess, rendered the enemy's opposition fruitless, and gained the mountains, having sustained incon siderable

able less in this daring but successful insurrection.

They reached the camp in safety; and when Zenayra entered the tent of her Castric, she once more breathed with freedom, and the prince pressed the beloved maid to his bosom, rendered doubly dear by the difficulties and hardships she had undergone, and by that heroic devotion, when, at the hazard of her own life, she had preserved her lover from the falchion of his foe. He felt more exquisite delight than if he had grasped the sceptre of the world, and beheld the congregated monarchs of the nations paying their homage at the foot of his throne.

He was now prepared to brave the fiercest fury of Amurath and his vengeful son. While fearing for the safety of his betrothed Zemyra, the maddening thought of what fate awaited her frequently

frequently rose to his imagination, like an horrible phantasm, too dreadful to contemplate. But blest certainty was now his; and in the love-beaming eyes and endearing smiles of his restored Zemyla, he read the assurance of the purest and most fervent passion of a heart unalterably and exclusively his own.

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.

"Already scatter'd o'er the plain,
Reproof, command, and counsel vain,
The frighted squadrons fled amain,
Or made but doubtful stay."

WHILE Castriot was thus successfully contending against the colossal power of the Turkish sultan in person, his great rival in military glory, the renowned Huniades, was chastising the insolence of Amurath's generals on the frontiers of Hungary.

In the interval of public tranquillity that succeeded to the stormy season of the

the fatal battle of Warna and its immediate consequences, Huniades, aided by the counsel of the venerable Lladomir, displayed the most splendid talents, as regent of Hungary, and acquired for himself, as a statesman, a degree of fame little inferior to his renown as a warrior. By his wise regulations and edicts, contending factions were conciliated, the authority of the crown maintained, and the happiness of the people preserved. Occupied in these peaceful avocations, and blest in the society of his beloved spouse and smiling offspring, the dreaded chieftain appeared softened into the mild legislator.

The warrior's sabre slept in its scabbard, and the foes of Hungary, who were accustomed to tremble before its terrible flashing, forgot their fears in their anticipations of successful rapine and unresisted plunder. But they roused

seed a slumbering lion, and paid dearly the price of their temerity and presumption.

The faithless, vacillating despot of Servia, by various intrigues and expedients, at length excited the sanjaks of Bulgaria and Romania to collect an army for the purpose of surprising Belgrade.

This attempt, which was rendered abortive by the valour and conduct of the governor, drew down upon the perpetrators the vengeance of the regent. At the head of his Wallachian cavalry, he quickly penetrated to the capital of Servia, and brought the basard monarch to sue for peace on his own terms.

Having chastised this contemptible foe, he resolved to punish the generals of Amurath for their insidious attack upon the frontier. With augmented force

force he carried devastation into Bulgaria, and was making rapid advances to Adrianople.

Terrified at the irresistible power which they had dared to provoke, the viziers now trembled for the safety of the metropolis, and dispatched couriers to the sultan, to acquaint him with the imminent peril that threatened the seat of his empire.

The messengers arrived at the camp just as the Epirot chief retired from his successful assault, and the intelligence of both events was conveyed to Amurath at the same moment. The audacity of Castriot, and the successful invasion of Huniades, filled his breast with rage and apprehension. Excess of passion seemed to have braced his nerves with returning health; and after venting his first paroxysms of fury upon all his attendants and officers that ventured to

to approach him, he became comparatively calm, and issued orders for the army's immediate return to Adrianople.

Messengers were dispatched to Mahomet, acquainting him with the cause of this sudden determination, and instructing him to follow, with the troops under his command, with all possible expedition.

The fury of Amurath was mildness compared to the whirlwind of passion that agitated the fierce soul of Mahomet when his father's dispatches arrived. He heaped the most direful curses upon Castriot and Huniades, and swore never to forget his enmity to these hated warriors, whose renown eclipsed the brightest glories of his own and his father's conquests. He blasphemed the names of Allah and his prophet, who failed to crown the arms of their votaries with success, and resolved to wreak his vengeance

ance on Moses, by whose instigation the war against Epirus had been undertaken.

The commands of Amurath for the speedy departure of his troops were hailed with joy by the whole army. The haughty janizaries, who had been accustomed to conquer every enemy, could ill brook the repeated defeats and want of plunder which they encountered in Epirus.

Before the morning's dawn, the still immense numbers of the hosts of Amurath and his furious son were in motion, on their hurried march towards Adrianople. Like raging wolves, driven by the shepherds from their rescued prey, the Turkish chieftains hastened from Epirus—from that kingdom which they so lately had exultingly entered, in the boasted expectation of conquest and triumph.

Bright

Bright rose the morning sun on the day of joy and deliverance to Epirus—the day of disgrace and confusion to the Turks. The joyful intelligence was quickly spread, and the deserted camp, which became the plunder of the Epirots, confirmed the un hoped-for news.

While the emancipated citizens of Croia satiated themselves with the spoil of the Turkish pavillons, the governor and his brave followers had joined the standard of their heroic prince, who, collecting his whole force, pursued the flying march of Amurath, and amidst the woods and mountains, the defiles and passes, harassed his army, and kept the host in constant terror and alarm.

When he had thus, as it were, driven his formidable enemy across the frontier, he desisted from the pursuit in the plains of Macedonia, and returned towards Sfetigrade, resolving to allow him self

self neither peace nor repose whilst a single foe remained in Epirus.

The whole force of Castriot's army was now employed against Sfetigrade. He completely invested the city, availing himself of the forts and other works raised by the Turkish sultan when he besieged it.

The governor, with determined courage and vigilance, resisted the repeated attacks of his persevering enemy, whose approaches to the walls were rapidly carried on. At length, after fourteen days spent in ineffectual attempts by the Epirots to storm the strongly-fortified and well-guarded battlements of Sfetigrade, the prince proposed honourable terms of capitulation to the besieged.

Despairing of succour from his sultan, the governor readily acceded to the proposals:

posals; and the sun which set on the fifteenth day of the siege gilded with its western beams the standard of Epirus on the walls of Sfetigrade!

Prince Hamesa, now recoyered from his wounds, commanded the escort which was appointed to give the garrison safe conduct beyond the confines of Epirus; and that patriotic chieftain never experienced greater delight than he felt in beholding the last file of Turks cross the boundary-stream which flowed between the country of Castriot and the dominions of Amurath.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XI.

"Whether

You can endure the livery of a sun,
For aye to be in shade shifter now'r'd;
To live a barren singer all your life,
Cheating songs hymns to the cold frostless morn."

WHEN Castriot left his mountain camp, to pursue the retreating army of his foes, he confided his recovered Zemyra to the care of Alexis.

The princess saw her hero depart on his triumphant errand with the opposite feelings of joy and fear. But joy quickly dissipated every doubt, and hope portrayed, in glowing tints, her lover's speedy

speedy return, with accumulated glories.

While these pleasing anticipations gave unusual lustre to Zemyra's speaking eyes, and restored the beauteous bloom of former days to her cheek, the habitual sadness of Alexis seemed increased. It was—his mind, hitherto occupied in the duties of war, had been less engrossed by the remembrance of hopeless love; but now that the foes of Epirus and of his friend were flying before his patriot bands—when peace and security were succeeding to bloodshed and danger—when friendship no longer demanded his exertions, love took full possession of his soul, and Marciana appeared to his mind's eye, with all the sorrowing loveliness in which he last beheld her, at their sad, though sweetly-remembered interview in the gardens of Palozzi.

The presence of Zemyra was like the banquet of Tantalus to Alexis. A strong resemblance to her cousin forcibly reminded him of the loveliness from which he was for ever separated, and which it would be madness to hope to call his own.

With a sensation of relief from intolerable oppression, he left Zemyra in the maternal embrace of the lady Euphrasia, who with joyful tears received her on the palace steps, while Alexis, hastily returning the greeting of Uracontes, disappeared through the lofty portico.

As he was not again seen at the governor's palace, Zemyra concluded he had followed her Castriot in his pursuit of the Turkish squadrons; and it gave her delight to reflect that the valiant arm of Alexis would be near her warrior in every danger, though she feared little from a flying enemy.

The

The day preceding that on which Sfetigrade once more opened its gates to its beloved monarch, a messenger from Uracontes entered the camp of Castriot. He was the bearer of a letter which had been delivered to the governor by an Italian monk. The prince, ever trembling for his soul's dearest treasure, so repeatedly snatched from him, eagerly questioned the messenger if aught had befallen his beloved princess? but he was quickly assured of her health and safety. He then retired to his tent, to peruse the letter, which, to his great astonishment, he found dated from Venice, in the characters, and with the subscription of Alexis, whom he thought still in the governor's palace at Croia.

Alexis began by excusing his abrupt departure from the metropolis; but the intelligence which he had received from Venice, by the agency of a friendly monk, had urged him to an immediate

journey to that city. He hastened to Durazzo, and with favourable breezes reached Venice on the fourth day. Great and melancholy changes had taken place in the short interval of his absence from that city. Public rumour informed him that Palozzi had been accused by secret enemies of embezzling the wealth of the state, by privately drawing large sums from the exchequer. But though he refuted the calumnies of his foes, he did not long survive the imputation of dis-honour: he died in the arms of his afflicted daughter, not without the suspicion of poison having been administered to him by his physician.

On the receipt of this heartrending intelligence, the marchioness di Camporino hastened to console and protect her orphan niece. The internal troubles of Italy rendering the journey by land extremely hazardous, the marchioness chose rather to return to Venice by a sea voyage.

voyage. But fate had not completed its vengeance on the house of Palozzi—the vessel in which the marchioness had embarked at Leghorn had scarcely entered the Adriatic, when she was driven by a tremendous gale upon the rocky shores of the Morea, and amidst the darkness and horrors of night and tempest, was lost, and few escaped to relate the disastrous fate of the unfortunate marchioness and her companions.

Intelligence of the melancholy catastrophe was communicated to the forlorn and afflicted Marciana, who, after the remains of her revered parent were consigned to the tomb of his ancestors, had returned to the convent of the order of Mercy. This new stroke of affliction pressed too heavily upon the heart of the mourner, already deeply wounded by her recent irreparable loss. She drooped, the victim of despair; and the violence of disease having driven reason

from its seat, the names of her father, her shipwrecked aunt, and her loved Alexis, were repeatedly uttered in her incoherent wanderings.

An affectionate nun, who ministered to her wants, and watched the progress of the disorder, sympathized in the sorrows of the gentle sufferer; and having heard that the Alexis so fondly named was the Epirot ambassador, she dispatched a monk to Epirus, with an account of Marciana's illness.

The journey of the friendly monk had been retarded by various difficulties, and by this means Alexis was spared the pain of witnessing the sufferings of his beloved. She slowly but gradually recovered, and employed the first moments of returning health to visit the tomb of her father.

Returning from this pious duty, she knelt

knelt before the hallowed crucifix in the chapel of the convent, and offered fervent aspirations for the repose of the souls of her revered departed relatives. In these her sincere vespers, Alexis was not forgotten. She had heard of the invasion of Epirus, and her fancy pictured the lord of her affections exposed to the dangers of the field.

At the mention of his name, a step behind her induced her to raise herself from her kneeling posture. Could the form which met her earnest gaze be that of her loved Alexis?—or was it only the visionary picture of her imagination? The warm embrace convinced her that no unreal phantom deceived her with the mockery of bliss.

Not finding her at the convent-gate, he had sought his beloved where the benevolent nun had directed his steps, and thus he had gained the sweet assurance

that his Martiana's affection was alike unchanged by time and circumstances.

The visits of Alexis to the convent were now frequent. The time spent in the parlour of the order seemed his only existence. The abbess at first seemed to smile on their loves; but when, on Martiana's complete recovery, she consented to unite her fate with that of her loved Alexis by the most solemn of all engagements, the abbess, forgetful of her obligations to the house of Palozzi, by whose influence she attained her present rank, endeavoured to dissuade Martiana from the intended union.

While the lovely patient's recovery was in the least uncertain, the superior cared little for preventing her interviews with a lover; but when returning health was visible in her countenance, she resolved to use her utmost endeavours to induce the rich heiress of the wealth of Palozzi

Palozzi and Camporino to take the veil, and consecrate her worldly riches to the service of the church, by endowing the convent of our Lady of Mercy. When persuasion failed, she exerted the authority of her office, and refused Alexis admittance to the convent parlour.

The despairing lover in vain tried all that the most pathetic letters and large promises could effect to induce the abbess to alter her determination—she remained inflexible. He then endeavoured to interest some of the nobles in his favour, and by their influence compel the superior to restore Marciana to the liberty of which she had so tyrannically deprived her.

But here disappointment awaited him—those who were solicitous of his acquaintance when he appeared at Venice in the quality of ambassador of Epirus, seemed to have forgotten Alexis of Byzantium,

zantium, when the name of envoy was
was no longer affixed to it.

Finding his hopes crushed in the quarter where they had been so sanguine, the despairing lover, as his last resource, resolved to apply to Luigi Giaga, who had been elected to the ducal chair on the death of Palozzi. Though the hostility of Giaga to the house of Palozzi while in the zenith of its prosperity was notorious, he hoped that Luigi would not pursue the declining fortunes of his enemy, by countenancing the oppression of a defenceless female.

Having formed this resolution, he was among the earliest attendants at the levee of Giaga. On his appearance in the anti-chamber, he drew a favourable augury from the strikingly different reception he encountered from those courtiers who had repelled his solicitations with

with proud contempt on the preceding day. He was immediately ushered into the presence of the doge, and having preferred his suit, was assured by Giaga that he would use his utmost influence with the abbess of our Lady of Mercy; at the same time expressing the satisfaction he should at all times feel in serving the friends of the prince of Epirus. He then proceeded to congratulate him on the success of his master's arms, and expressed his earnest desire for the continuance of the amicable alliance which had been formed between the prince and his predecessor.

Alexis now perceived to what cause to attribute his success, which had surpassed his most ardent hopes. Authentic accounts of the brilliant termination of the Turkish invasion of Epirus in favour of its heroic defenders had at length reached Venice. The whole soul of Alexis, since his arrival in the city,

had been occupied by his Marciana, and to no other had he communicated the splendid successes of this friend and sovereign.

The Venetian courtiers, unconscious of this change in the fortunes of Epina, and in daily expectation of hearing of its total conquest by Amurath, had treated Alexis with proud contempt, till the unexpected success of Castrion raised his friend to an exalted pitch in the opinion of the counsellors of Giaga. That prince therefore entered warmly into his interests, and secretly wishing to remove the last representative of the fallen Palozzi from Venice, he personally required the abbess to forward the union of Marciana and Alexis by every means within her power.

With unfeigned surprise the abbess received these unwelcome injunctions. From Giaga she least of all expected any

any opposition to her proceedings with regard to Marciana. But the superior of our Lady of Mercy was a true courtier, though a cloistered one, and with assumed smiles expressed her readiness to accede to his highness's request; and Marciana was immediately released from her cell, to which she had been confined, and once more restored to her enraptured Alexis.

Without a surviving relative to whom she could look for protection, and finding how little dependence could be placed even upon the sanctuary of a convent, Marciana was at length prevailed upon by her lover to give him the endearing title of husband, and thus constitute him her tenderest guardian—her firmest protector.

After the performance of the sacred ceremony, which endowed the happy Alexis with a more dearly-prized treasure

sure than the possession of the mines of Golconda, they staid no longer in Venice than the arrangement of Marciana's affairs rendered necessary. To the daughter of Palozzi, that queen of the ocean had lost all its fascinating charms—its attractions were all entombed in the grave of her revered father.

The epistle of Alexis to his friend furnished him with a sketch of the foregoing particulars, and concluded by informing him of his intention of proceeding with his bride to Epirus by easy land journeys, fearing to agitate her delicate frame by hazarding a sea voyage.

CHAP-

“The war-fiend’s bloody work is done,
The foe is fled, the victory won,
The day of triumph is begun,
Of peace and liberty.”

CHAPTER XII.

“The war-fiend’s bloody work is done,
The foe is fled, the victory won,
The day of triumph is begun,
Of peace and liberty.”

CASTRIOT warmly and joyfully sympathized in the happiness of his adopted brother. It was a day of jubilee for all Epirus : Sfetigrade having surrendered, the last flock of vultures that so long had preyed upon the vitals of the oppressed country was driven from her confines—the triumph of courage, perseverance, and patriotism, was complete.

How gloriously different were the feelings

feelings of Castriot at the conclusion of the war, from those which distracted the breast of the recreant duke of Albania! The favourite of Amurath had rejected all the honours and distinctions of the Turkish court, on the instant that he discovered they were but golden chains to link him to the car of perfidy and despotism. To avenge the blood of his brothers, the wrongs of his house, and the oppression of his country, he had dared to oppose his power, strong in right, but weak in numbers, against the unnumbered hosts of a tyrant, whose standard of equity was the strength of this giant.

But Moneses, the chosen friend and associate of the father, at the call of ambition had basely deserted the cause of the son, and to gratify his arrogant passions, would have overwhelmed both him and Epirus in irrecoverable destruction.

He

He now reaped his reward. Exasperated at the unsuccessful and disastrous termination of the war, in which they had anticipated nothing but glory and conquest, the Mahometan princes began to view the duke of Albania with the distorted eye of jealousy, and to impute their misfortunes to his agency. His disgrace was quickly perceived by the courtiers; and, to complete his ruin, they suborned his own confidant, Pezovi, to accuse him of a secret correspondence with Castrio since his arrival in the Turkish camp.

On this intelligence the sanguinary Mahomet resolved on his execution, but deferred his secret purpose till their arrival in Adrianople, in expectation of gaining some further information on the subject. This delay saved the life of Meneses; for on the very night of the sultan's arrival at the metropolis, the duke

duke gained certain intelligence of his approaching fate.

Aware of the promptitude with which the mutes executed the commands of their master by the fatal bow-string, Moneses consulted his safety by immediate flight to his former retreat among the dervises, having assumed the garb of that wandering order. Here he found all as he had left it, and represented himself as just returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca.

He here securely abided until the search which Amurath had caused to be made for him was past, and then repaired to the cave of Mount Hæmus, where he soon collected a fresh band of more desperate characters.

His talents for military enterprise made him dreaded by the whole neighbouring

bouring country, more than he ever had been; and the viceroy of Romania having discovered in the fierce bandit of Thrace the fugitive duke of Albania, marched against him with a strong force, and having possessed himself of every avenue to the cavern, left him without the hope of escape.

Thus pursued, like a ferocious beast, to his den, Moneses, with valour worthy of a better cause, defended himself to the last extremity, till, overpowered by numbers, he fell with his sabre firmly grasped in his hand, and gained by his bravery in his death, even from the Turks, that respect which they had never paid him while alive.

At the head of his victorious patriots Castriot began his march from Sfetigrade to the metropolis. Every step that he advanced he was met by joyful groupes of peasants, arrayed in their festival

festival garb, hailing their deliverer and princee. Blooming girls and youths strewed the way with their rural tribute of flowers, while the aged invoked blessings on the defenders of their hearths and their altars.

On their approach to Croia the numbers increased, till they formed an animated vista for the returning heroes. At the foot of the hill the governor and burghers were stationed to receive them, with whom the ambassadors from the neighbouring states, and the nobles of the kingdom, united their congratulations.

The prince looked around with exultation of heart, but the lover required the presence of one adored object to make his happiness perfect, amidst the scene of triumph and glory by which on all sides he was surrounded. Nor did he languish long—Zemyna approached, encircled

circled by a lovely band of youthful females, daughters of the nobles and warriors of Epirus.

Lightly pressing a snow-white palfrey, she seemed to his enraptured gaze like the mild majesty of full-orbed Cynthia, at whose appearance the stars shine with diminished lustre. The wreath of laurel with which the fair hand of Zemyra decked the brows of her victorious hero, was more dearly prized by him than the richest diadem of the eastern world.

Tears of joy increased the lustre of Zemyra's beauty, as she shared and witnessed the glory of her lover. Not on the liberties of his country, and through the blood of his subjects, had he driven the car of triumph—no groans of captives were drowned by the hireling shout of a mercenary mob; But amidst the heartfelt acclamations of an emancipated

good people—smilest the expression
of maternal mildness and protection.
—his hand looked in her white
gloves—she remained for him the noble
in the wall—enriched by red roses
house, the prince took possession
the palace of his master.

On the third day after his return
to the abbey of Cîteaux, in the outer
church of the city, gave the royal
audience to the prince and princess
the presence of the nobles of the
ambassadors of foreign powers
of the army, and dignitaries
church.

When the ceremonies of
the royal pair were performed
at the church of St. Peter in the
walls of the city; and the
time of their almost clandestine
and secret marriage was
announced to the publica-

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ter into an alliance with him in behalf of the sultan.

Castriot readily acceded to the proposals; but was not thrown off his guard by these amicable professions; he still preserved the same discipline in his army, and kept his fortresses in the same posture of defence.

Having secured his kingdom from the fear of these his most dreaded enemies, and established himself upon the throne of his fathers, Mahomet brought his long-projected enterprise to perfection, by the overthrow of the last vestige of Roman dominion, in the capture of Constantinople, and the slaughter of the last of the Cæsars.

All Europe trembled at the aggrandisement of the Turkish empire, but beheld with admiration the successful resistance

resistance of a small kingdom, whose soldiers were animated by the spirit of patriotism, and led to the field by a beloved chief, while it deplored the fall of a still-powerful empire, whose sovereign was weak and irresolute, whose counsellors were traitors, and her defenders foreign mercenaries, and whose coffers were drained in enriching arrogant individuals. The mountains of Epirus were stronger ramparts than the boasted walls of Constantine, and the flame of their country's love, that glowed in the breasts of the Epirots, proved more destructive to their enemies than the unquenchable Greek fire, which the engines of Palæologus hurled upon the besiegers of his capital.

Castriot had now reached the goal of earthly bliss. Sovereign of a brave and warlike people, and enthroned in their hearts—possessed of the purest domestic happiness, far beyond the general lot of

princes, he lived beloved by his subjects, respected by his allies, feared by his enemies, and esteemed by the good of every country who venerated the patriotism which had been so nobly displayed in the character and achievements of the HERO OF EPIRUS.

FINIS.

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